

S E R M O N S
A N D
D I S C O U R S E S
O N
P R A C T I C A L S U B J E C T S :

Never before Printed.

By *ROBERT MOSS*, D. D.
Late Dean of *Ely*, and Preacher to the Honourable SOCIETY of *Grays-Inn*.

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S E R M O N I.

Of the Power and Efficacy of Prayer.

MATTH. vii. 7, 8.

*Ask, and it shall be given you; seek,
and ye shall find; knock, and it
shall be opened unto you.*

*For every one that asketh, receiveth;
and he that seeketh, findeth; and
to him that knocketh it shall be
opened.*



IF we be at any Loss for the Con-
nexion of these Words, and
think it necessary to be en-
quir'd after, perhaps we shall
be obliged to look back into the foregoing
VOL. III. B Chapter,

S E R M.
I.

S E R M. Chapter, and consider the Relation that
 I. they bear to that most excellent Form of
 Prayer, which our Lord there taught his
 Disciples. For thither they seem naturally
 to belong; and so they may well enough,
 notwithstanding the Distance that is be-
 tween; because 'tis still but one continued
 Discourse, though interwoven with much
 Variety of heavenly Doctrine.

AND as we have there his exprefs Di-
 rections, and particular Instructions con-
 cerning the Matter, and the Method of our
 Prayers; so have we here all imaginable
 Encouragement to pursue *them*; and to set
 ourselves chearfully to the Performance of
 a Duty, which is itself a *Privilege*, a real
Blessing; and the Vehicle, through which
 all other *Blessings* are convey'd unto us.

THE Affinity therefore of the Subject
 Matter makes it probable, that the Words
 are to be understood with this Reference;
 and we are farther confirmed in it from
 the 11th Chapter of *Luke*. For there, af-
 ter a Rehearsal of the Lord's Prayer, and
 a Similitude inciting them to pray with
 Confidence, and Perseverance, our Saviour
 is introduc'd with some Solemnity, as ad-
 ding



Efficacy of Prayer.

3

ding these very Words: *And I say unto* S E R M.
you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, I.
and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be o- Ver. 9,
pened unto you. For every one that asketh, 10.
receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and
to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.

THE Design of which, being to set forth the mighty Force, the happy Fruits of the Duty of Prayer, it is in Effect the best Inducement to Practice, and the greatest Incentive to Devotion that is possible.

AND so no Doubt it was *most effectually* to those who had the Happiness to hear it from the Mouth of him, who *spake as never Man spake*. But that it may not lose its Effect upon us for want of that Advantage, it may be proper to examine with some Care, how Prayer comes to be so very powerful, and beneficial, to what Degree it is so, and what Qualifications are requisite to make it so.

AND accordingly, I shall make it my present Business to shew,

I. *First*, WHEREUPON the Efficacy of Prayer is founded, and whence derived.

B 2

II. *Secondly*,

S E R M. II. *Secondly*, How great that Efficacy is,
 I. or how far it extends.

III. *Thirdly*, WITH what Conditions it is, and ought to be qualified, or wherein it is limited.

THE *First* of which will discover the main Foundation of our Assurance: The *Second* its vast Breadth and Extent: And the *Third* will mark out its Bounds, and fix them, that we may not mistake our Ground, and be apt to build upon false Hopes. And

I. *First*, I SHALL shew whereupon the Efficacy of Prayer is founded, and whence it is deriv'd. And this is an Enquiry of the first Importance; for since such great, and good Effects are here, and every where ascrib'd unto it, it will not be enough to believe it in the Gross, but we ought to satisfy ourselves very particularly, that the Cause is not too weak, and insufficient for the Effects to which it is entitled.

AND unless we be very well assur'd of this, our Faith will be but wavering, and our Comfort uncertain.

FOR,

Efficacy of Prayer.

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FOR, for Example's Sake, if we should S E R M.
fondly imagine, (as 'tis to be fear'd some I.
do) that the Virtue of Prayer consists in a
sort of secret Incantation, that the num-
bring a certain Tale of Beads, and mut-
tering over so many *Pater-nosters* charms
the Almighty into good Nature, and draws
down the Blessings of Heaven; I say, should
we thus imagine, our Devotion would be
so far from being well grounded and satis-
factory, that, if brought to the Test of
right Reason, it would appear absurd, and
ridiculous, unworthy, both of God, and
ourselves. So in like Manner, should we
presume upon the Merit of our Prayers,
and think ourselves upon that Score in-
vested with a right to God's Favour, and
Acceptance; this, I am afraid, would prove
but a very slender Support to our Hopes,
when once we come to examine what it is
should make them so very meritorious.

FOR is it our Want, and Misery? Then
it were meritorious to be Beggars. Is it
our Folly and Sin? Then it were merito-
rious to be Rebels. Or is it our entire O-
bedience, and the perfect Discharge of our

B 3

whole

SERM. whole Duty? That, I doubt, can hardly be pretended to. And if it could, it would still be no more than our Duty, and we should be no better than *unprofitable Servants*. And are there any Thanks due for that? Or can there be any Ground for such an Assurance? I trow not.

IT will concern us therefore, not to suffer ourselves to be deluded with these, or any such vain Thoughts as these are, but to take the Scriptures for our Guide, and search them for the true Reason of all that Power which is attributed to Prayer; and, having found it, to establish our Faith, and Trust thereupon. And

THE *First* Reason into which the Efficacy of Prayer is to be resolv'd, is the Bignity of the divine Nature, and that perpetual Propensity to do us *good*, which we, upon our own Experience, are wont to call the Goodness of God. And of this the Scripture, or rather, as the *Psalmist* says, *The whole Earth is full*. For there is nothing needful, or convenient, comfortable, or desirable; nothing that we either want, or wish for, that we *do* enjoy, or
may

Efficacy of Prayer.

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may expect, but what is ever springing, S E R M.
and plentifully flowing from that inexhaustible Source. I.

BUT to this, to be sure, are those Blessings more especially owing, which we receive in Answer to our Prayers, which is sufficiently evident from those Illustrations, which our Saviour makes use of, both in *St. Matthew*, and *St. Luke*.

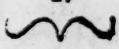
FOR, after the general Encouragement given us to pray in the Words of my Text, we are taught, every Man from the natural Motions of his own Breast, to depend upon the Goodness of God for the Success of our Prayers. *For what Man is there of you* (says our blessed Lord) *whom if his Son ask Bread, will he give him a Stone? (i. e. What is useless instead of what is necessary.) Or if he ask a Fish, will he give him a Serpent? i. e. What is hurtful, instead of what is wholesome. If ye then being evil, know how to give good Gifts unto your Children, how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven give good Things to them that ask him?* Mat. vii. 10, &c.

THE Argument concludes strong. For if the Affection of a Parent does powerfully

SERM. incline him, notwithstanding he may be
 I. otherwise niggardly, and close-fisted, to
 supply the Necessities, and to the best of
 his Discretion, to provide for the Well-
 Being of his Children; much more will the
 Goodness of God, which is infinite, and
 his Liberality, which is unconfin'd, extend
 itself to those, who make their Supplica-
 tions unto him. For he bears the com-
 mon Relation of a Father to us all, and he
 has a Care, and Tenderneſs for us, infi-
 nitely beyond that of the most indulgent
 Parent upon Earth. And therefore he is
 always ready to hear our Voice in Prayer,
 according to his loving Kindneſs: Not that
 he indiscriminately grants whatsoever we
 may be so foolish as to ask, (for that would
 be neither according to his loving Kind-
 neſs, nor his Wiſdom:) But he liberally
 gives what he knows to be really good for
 us, and fitteſt for our Circumſtances; and
 to be ſure he never withholds, unleſs it
 be when we render ourſelves incapable of
 it, the beſt good Thing of all others;
 that is, the Aid and Comfort of his Holy
 Spirit. For St. *Luke* ſums up all in this, as
 being the moſt neceſſary, and moſt abſo-
 lute

Efficacy of Prayer.

9

lute good. *How much more therefore, will* S E R M,
your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to I.
them that ask him. 

AND those other Parables of the Man going to borrow Bread of his Friend at Midnight, in the 11th of St. *Luke*, and of the importunate Widow, and the unjust Lukexviii. Judge, turn much upon the same Reason. For if (as these Parables represent it) Confidence, and Importunity, and troublesome Application, will go nigh to constrain, even ill Men to do good sometimes against their own Inclinations; much more will the earnest, and fervent Prayers of the Saints prevail with a righteous, and compassionate God, *even for his own Mercy's Sake, and because he has a Favour unto them.* So that the very Corner-stone, on which the Efficacy of Prayer is chiefly founded, is the Goodness of God, and his Beneficence towards us.

BUT *Secondly*, As it is founded in his Goodness, so it rests upon his Wisdom, and Veracity, and Power. For 'tis the Wisdom of divine Providence to appoint Prayer as the necessary Means of obtaining the good Things we want, and 'tis the
Truth,

SERM. Truth, and Stability of God's sacred Promises that makes the Means effectual: And 'tis his Power that produces the Effect, and makes the Event answerable to it. Even Instinct casts all living Creatures upon Providence, according to that of the *Psalmist*,
 I. *The Eyes of all wait upon thee, and thou givest them their Meat in due Season. Thou openest thine Hand, and satisfiest the Desire of every living Thing.*

Pf. cxlv.
 15, 16.

AND Reason shews, that this Dependence well befits the State of rational Creatures; to keep up in their Minds the Sense of that Submission, that Duty, and Gratitude which they owe to the bountiful Creator, for the Use, and Enjoyment of his manifold Gifts.

AND that they may want no Manner of Encouragement, the Word of Truth declares on God's Part, the Acceptance of this their Homage, and Service; and the Word of Power gives them an Assurance of an answerable Return to their Prayers. For thus it follows in the *Psalm* aforecited, *The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in Truth. He will fulfil the Desire of them that*

Ver. 18,
 19.

Efficacy of Prayer.

II

that fear him. He also will hear their Cry, and will save them. And, not to produce the many Passages of Scripture, that make to the same Purpose, nothing can be more exprefs, and full than the Promise of my Text. *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you, &c.* And I need not add, that 'tis the Promise of him that doeth whatsoever pleaseth him in Heaven, and Earth. Herein therefore consists a great Part of that prevailing Power that is attributed to Prayer, that God's Veracity is expressly engag'd for the Performance of what his Power is able to effect, and his Providence has wisely order'd thus to be effected, *i. e.* first to be sued for, and so to be obtain'd. But

Thirdly, THAT which adds much to the Force, and Efficacy of Prayer, and makes the whole Foundation firm upon which it stands, is the Merit, and Mediation of *Jesus Christ*. For though the Goodness of God most graciously inclines him to do us good, and though his faithful Promises do, on some certain Conditions, even bind him so to do; yet 'tis as certain, that he heareth

not

SERMON. not Sinners; nay, that their very Prayers
 I. are an Abomination to him. And 'till this
 grand Obstacle be remov'd, our general Interest in God's Goodness, and the conditional Title we have to his Promises can avail us nothing. His Wrath must first be appeas'd, and his Justice satisfy'd for Sin, before his Mercy can take Place, or dispense Favour to the Sinner. To this End therefore *Christ appear'd once in the Flesh to put away Sin, by the Sacrifices of himself.* For as Sacrifice was * antiently a Rite of Supplication, in the Acceptance of which, the Transgressor of the Law of *Moses* was reconcil'd to God, and restor'd to the Privileges of the Covenant: So (but much more effectually) was God *in Christ, reconciling the World to himself; and since he has deliver'd up his own Son for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all Things?* Especially since the Sacrifice offer'd for us, was not only pure, and spotless, but the High-Priest also such as became us, separate from Sinners, and conse-

* *Mede's dissert.* 482.

Efficacy of Prayer.

I 3

crated for evermore. *For it is Christ that* SERM.
died; yea, rather that is risen again, and I.
is even at the right Hand of God, who also
maketh Intercession for us: Wherefore he is
able to save us unto the uttermost, if we
come unto God by him, since he ever liveth
to make this Intercession for us; the Power
with which he is invested being such, as
shall never cease, and the Merit upon
which he pleads such as never can be ex-
hausted.

HEREUPON therefore we may raise, and
fix our Hopes, that *whatsoever we ask the*
Father in his Son's Name, he will give it
us. For as nothing is more precious in his
Sight, than *that Blood which was shed for*
many for the Remission of Sins, so nothing
can be more efficacious to procure this, and
all other the Benefits of *Christ's* Passion,
than our Prayers conceived upon this Be-
lief, especially when mingled with our *Eu-*
charistical Praises, and devoutly offer'd un-
to God in the commemorative Sacrifice of
Christ's Body, and Blood, as 'tis represented
in the blessed Sacrament.

Fourthly and Lastly, as all the Promises
of God in *Christ* are yea, and *Amen*; so
the

S E R M the Holy Spirit of Promise already receiv'd
 I. by all true *Christians*, is the great Confirmation of their Faith, and a Pledge of Security to them, that their Prayers shall be heard and answer'd.

AND indeed, when they pray for Pardon, and Grace, and Salvation, and all the Fulness of the Blessings of the Gospel of *Christ*; they sue upon the best Claim that can be, as *having the Earnest of the Spirit* (as the Scripture calls it) *already in their Hearts*, which, being as it were, in Part of Payment, entitles them to the whole Summ, all that is necessary to the Completion of their Happiness.

AND moreover, that very same blessed Spirit, which is the Author of those Gifts, and Graces, of the first Fruits whereof all *Christians* do partake, is the Fellow-helper of their Weakness, a Director to their Ignorance, the Sanctifier, and Furtherer of all their Prayers, and a secret, but powerful Intercessor for them. Agreeable to that of the Apostle; *Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our Infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh Intercession for us, with*

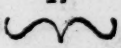
2 Cor. i.
22.

Rom. viii.
26.

Efficacy of Prayer.

15

with Groanings which cannot be uttered. SERM.

I.  IN the Result therefore it appears, that the Efficacy of Prayer is originally founded on the Goodness of God, confirmed by his Wisdom and Truth, ratified in the Merits, and Mediation of *Christ*, and effectually made good by the Collation of the Holy Spirit, and the Assistance, and Furtherance thereby afforded to us.

I PROCEED now in the second Place,

II. *Secondly*, To shew how great that Efficacy is, or how far it extends. And doubtless, it is vastly great, and very extensive; for mighty Things are said of it in Scripture; and there is nothing so difficult, or (humanely speaking) so impossible, but what is there represented, as possible, and feasible to Prayer. *The effectual fervent Prayer of the righteous Man availeth much*, saith St. James. And 'tis a noble Instance to prove it by, that which follows: *Elias was a Man subject to like Passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly, that it might not rain; and it rained not for the Space of three Years, and six Months. And he prayed again, and the* Heaven

SERM. *Heaven gave Rain, and the Earth brought
I. forth her Fruit.*

AND the Delegation of this Power by our Saviour to his Disciples, is so very large, that it reaches even to natural Impossibilities. For when they marvelled at the sudden withering of the Fig-tree (as we read *Matth. xxi. 21, 22.*) *Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily, I say unto you, if ye have Faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this that is done to the Fig-tree, but also if ye shall say unto this Mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the Sea, it shall be done. And all Things whatsoever ye shall ask in Prayer, believing, ye shall receive; or as it is more emphatically express'd in St. Mark, What Things soever ye desire when we pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them; where the Certainty of obtaining their Requests is carried so high, that they are to look upon them, it seems, by Faith, as already obtain'd.*

Ch. xi.
24.

IF it be observ'd, that the Power of Prayer so much magnify'd in these Instances, is supposed to be accompany'd with the Gift of Miracles, and perhaps to be
itself

Efficacy of Prayer.

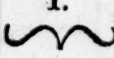
17

Itself also miraculous, and the immediate S E R M.
Effect of divine Inspiration, (as Dr. *Ham-*
mond is willing to understand the Word I.
ἐνεργημένη in St. *James*.) I say, if this Ob-
servation be made; I don't much deny it;
but I deny that this is any Abatement to
the Efficacy of Prayer, even in the ordi-
nary Exercise of it.

FOR the Faith which is exercised in
Prayer, as I take it, is the same in Kind,
(though not in Degree) whether he that
prayeth be extraordinarily gifted; and with-
al, enabled to work Miracles, or whether
he be not so. And the Fidelity of God's
general Promise, and the Sufficiency of his
Power, are alike able to support it in both
Cases. With this Difference only, that
where the Subject of Prayer is something
beyond all humane Possibility, there Faith
ought to be the more intensely fix'd, and
to rest itself immediately upon the Omni-
potence of God, to *whom all Things are*
possible, and through whom, if we believe,
nothing shall be impossible to us.

HOWEVER, the Argument will hold *a*
Majori, if an extraordinary Degree of Faith,
exerting itself in Prayer, be able (as appears
VOL. III. C from

SER M. from Scripture) to produce such Effects as

I.  are truly wonderful, and supernatural; then sure the common Measure which is dealt to all, and is owing to the Operation of the same Spirit, must be sufficient to procure all ordinary Blessings, whatsoever is necessary to our real Happiness, and everlasting Salvation. And I may add, that even this common Measure in Virtue of the general Promise, is capable of farther Encrease, as the greater Glory of God, and the Good of his Church may require.

UPON the whole therefore, the Efficacy of Prayer is in itself universal, and unlimited: All Things are possible with Prayer, that are possible with God; but yet in order to make it effectual in particular Cases, there are some necessary Conditions requir'd, upon which the Success of it is suspended; which leads me to the third, and last Part of my Discourse, *viz.*

III. *Thirdly*, To shew what those Conditions are, with which Prayer ought to be qualified, and without which it cannot be effectual. For it is not to be imagin'd, that God should ordain Prayer, merely

Efficacy of Prayer.

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as a mechanical Instrument, to enable his SERM.
Creatures to wrest his Blessings forcibly I.
from him; or that he should subject himself
to a fatal Necessity of giving without Dis-
cretion, all that they may be so fond as to
ask without Reason. No! if it derives all
its Virtue (as I have shewn it does) from
the Attributes of God, through the Satis-
faction, and Intercession of *Christ*, by the
Co-operation of the Holy Spirit, then
doubtless it can be of no Effect, but only
so far forth as it consists with such the At-
tributes of God, and whatever else makes
any Part of its Foundation; and also with
the good, and gracious Ends of its Institu-
tion, which are no other than the Glory
of God, and (subordinate thereunto) the
Benefit of Mankind. And we may venture
to pronounce, that so far forth as it con-
forms to this Rule, and conduces to these
Ends, it never does, nor even can fall short
of its Effect. And that it may not, thro'
any Default of ours, it is requisite in the
general, that it should be in all Points a-
greeable to the divine Will of God. For
(as *St. John* says) *This is the Confidence that*
we have in him, (that is the Son of God) 1 Ep. v. 14, &c.

SERM. that if we ask any Thing according to his
 I. Will he beareth us.

AND the particular Conditions arising out of this general one, may respect;

First, THE Matter of the Petition.

Secondly, THE State of the Petitioner.

Thirdly, THE Manner of his Address.

First, THE Matter of the Petition (if we would hope for any Success) ought to be lawful, and good, fit, and expedient, neither interfering with God's wise Counsels, and Decrees, nor obstructing his greater Glory, nor the greater Good, and Advantage of the Petitioner.

Secondly, THE State of the Petitioner (if he expects to be heard, and answer'd) should be that of a righteous Man, (tho' not perfectly so yet) such a one as sincerely desires, and endeavours so to be, and is truly penitent for all his Misdoings.

Thirdly, THE Manner of his Address (that no Impediment may remain) ought to be such, as becomes a Supplicant, with all Humility and Reverence, as being under a Sense of his Sins past, and in the Sight of his God; with stedfast Faith, relying upon the Goodness, and Truth of
 God's

Efficacy of Prayer.

21

God's Promises, and the Greatness of his S E R M.
Power, referring himself wholly to his I.
Wisdom, for the Accomplishment in his
own Time, and on his own Terms; with
Earnestness, and Perseverance proportion'd
to the Nature, and Worth of the Things
he prays for; asking for the best Things
first, and with the greatest Ardor, and
Forwardness of Affection, praying abso-
lutely for what is absolutely, and immuta-
bly good, and moderately for what is of a
middle Nature, expecting the Event with
Patience, and receiving it with Content-
ment, and resigning himself entirely into the
Hands of infinite Wisdom, and Goodness.

THESE (and such as these) are the ne-
cessary Conditions of Prayer, which, if
carefully observ'd, will verify the Words
of my Text in their utmost Latitude. For
when thus qualify'd, without all Perad-
venture, *Every one that asketh, receiveth;
and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that
knocketh, it shall be opened.* But on the o-
ther Hand, where these Conditions are
neglected, let not any Man wonder that
his Prayer returns empty, and without a
Blessing; nay, let him not think that he

S E R M. shall receive any Thing of the Lord; for
 I. he justly forfeits the Privilege by not observing the Terms of it, and he defeats his own Intention by asking amiss, for other Things, upon other Motives, with other Views, and Designs, than God sees fit to allow, or can indeed, consistently with his own Honour, or the Welfare of his Creature.

You must needs perceive, that under this last Head, I have only given you the Lines of another Discourse, which this Subject will well deserve, but I cannot fill up at present.

IN the mean Time, what has been said is sufficient to convince us all, of our great Obligation, and Encouragement to pray. The Obligation is grounded upon this, that 'tis an acceptable Piece of Service, and dutiful Homage to God, the *God who heareth Prayer*, i. e. is infinitely wise, and so knows all our Wants; and infinitely good, and therefore willing to afford us Succour; and infinitely powerful, and consequently able to assist us to the last Extremity. To him therefore it is meet, and right, that all Flesh should come, and bow the Knee,
 and

Efficacy of Prayer.

23

and Heart before him, especially since S E R M.
Prayer is an Ordinance of his own, bound I.
upon us by the most express, and solemn
Precept.

AND we have all imaginable Encouragement to yield our hearty Compliance thereunto; for this certainly, of all God's Commandments, can never be grievous, as implying indeed the greatest Honour, and the highest Privilege. And the Burden of it (if any be) is marvellously lightened, and sweetned by the gracious Promises annex'd unto it; of which we are so frequently reminded in Scripture, that sure for that very Reason *we ought always to pray, and not to faint.*

ESPECIALLY, if it be consider'd, that the Efficacy of Prayer is vastly great, as being founded upon the Goodness, Wisdom, Truth, and Power of God, together with the merciful Provision of a Saviour, to make Way for it, and second it by his powerful Intercession, and a Sanctifier to consecrate, and wing it by his heavenly Aspiration.

AND to embolden us the more, there is a Sort of Omnipotence ascrib'd to it in

C 4

Scripture,

SERM. Scripture, and Examples are there to be
 I. met with of mighty Works, and Wonders
 that have been wrought by it; and therefore we may be confident, that 'tis abundantly able to procure all that is fit for God to grant, or needful, and salutary for us to ask: Nor is it any Derogation to its Power, that it is limited by some certain Conditions. For God that is Almighty, cannot do what would unbecome him to do: And Prayer, that by the Grace of God is next to Almighty, can only not obtain what is unfitting to be obtain'd.

To conclude then, since upon all these Considerations, it appears to be, both our Duty, and Interest to pray, let us not say with the prophane, and irreligious, what need of Prayer, since the All-wise wants no Information; what booteth it, since infinite Goodness wants no Importunities? Let it rather suffice, that God has thought good to require it, and that 'tis a wise Method of Providence on his Part, and a reasonable Service on ours, and that, if we defraud not ourselves, it may be of mighty Advantage to us.

LET

LET us not say therefore again, with SERM.
I.
the presumptuous, and secure: There is one Event to the devout, and him that is not so. I have prayed, and am never the better, I have let it alone, and am never the worse, and to Morrow, I trust, shall be as this Day, and much more abundant; my Barns, and Coffers every whit as full.

FOR such Men must not be allowed to judge of the Virtue of Prayer, *who either ask not at all, or ask amiss, that they may consume it upon their Lusts.* And let them know, that they have no very good Title to what they possess; for if they own it not as God's Gift, they hold it only by Usurpation; and if they taste not his Goodness in't, I am sure 'tis no Enjoyment. Let them not therefore oppose their gross, and carnal Sense, to the spiritual Taste, and Experience of others: For though they may partake of the common, and promiscuous Distributions of Providence; yet the Blessing never goes without the Promise, and the Promise is annexed only to fervent, and earnest Prayer. *Ask, and ye shall have, seek, and ye shall find, knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one,*

SERM. *one*, (and he alone) *that asketh*, as he ought,
I. *receiveth* what is really good for him:
And he that thus *seeketh*, *findeth* the only
true Satisfaction, and to him that thus im-
portunately *knocketh*, shall the Door be o-
pened, that leadeth to everlasting Happi-
ness.

Which God of his infinite Mercy grant, &c.



S E R M O N



S E R M O N II.

Of the Power, and Efficacy of Prayer.

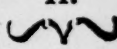


MATTH. vii. 7, 8.

Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.



IN Order to the fuller Expli- S E R M.
cation, and the better Ap- II.
plication of these Words, 
which contain one of the
most gracious, and liberal
Promises, to which a *Christian* is entitled,
I propos'd

SERM. I propos'd to myself these three Enquiries, viz.

II.

I. *First*, WHEREUPON the Efficacy of Prayer is founded, and whence it is deriv'd.

II. *Secondly*, How great that Efficacy is, and how far it extends.

III. *Thirdly*, WITH what Conditions it ought to be qualified, or with what Limitations it is bounded.

IN the Resolution of the first Enquiry, I endeavour'd to shew, that all the mighty Force that is attributed in Scripture to Prayer, is grounded originally upon the very Nature, and Attributes of God, such as are his Goodness, perpetually disposing him to do good to us; his Wisdom ordaining Prayer to be the Instrument of obtaining, and the Vehicle of conveying the Effects of his Goodness towards us; his Promise engaging for the Performance, and his Power that is at all Times sufficient to answer it in the Event. And that nothing might be wanting to make it thoroughly effectual, I have shewn that
its

its Force is wonderfully strengthened by SERM.
the Merits of *Christ*, suffering, and inter- II.
ceding for us, and by the Aids of the Ho-
ly Spirit, sanctifying, and furthering our
weak Endeavours, and yielding us a strong
Consolation in the Discharge of a Duty
so powerfully recommended unto God.

THIS therefore is the firm, and well
compactd Foundation of our Faith, and
Hope, our Confidence, and Assurance in
Prayer.

IN answer to the *second* Enquiry, *viz.*
How great the Efficacy of Prayer is, and
how far it extends; I have shewn, that a
Sort of Omnipotence is ascrib'd to it in
Scripture, that Miracles have been wrought
by it; and in a Word, that all Things are
possible to Prayer, which are possible to
the God, that heareth Prayer; and conse-
quently, since there is no Difficulty, or
humane Impossibility that can stand in our
Way, we may depend upon it, if we pray
as we ought, that we shall obtain what
God knows to be most needful, or expe-
dient for us. For, if extraordinary, and
miraculous Effects have been produced by
Prayer, upon extraordinary Exigencies, and
for

SERM. for extraordinary Purposes, then doubtless
 II. its ordinary Virtue must be abundantly
 sufficient to answer all our ordinary Occa-
 sions, and to procure what we principally
 need. And in this Latitude we may;
 nay, we must understand the Promise of
 the Text, that, every one *that asketh,*
receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and
to him that knocketh, it shall be opened. That
 is to say, he has all the reasonable Securi-
 ty for it that God could give, or Man
 could wish; and if, in the Issue, the Suc-
 cess proves not answerable, he must im-
 pute it only to his own Incapacity, and
 Unworthiness, and the Want of those Qua-
 lifications, which give Prayer its sweet O-
 dour, and make it ascend like Incense be-
 fore the Almighty.

AND yet since, notwithstanding the Am-
 plitude of this Promise, many a one there
 is, who asketh, and yet receiveth not, who
 seeketh (and perhaps diligently too) and
 yet findeth not; who knocketh earnestly,
 and there is none to answer, or open unto
 him; I say, since this is frequently the
 Experience, even of good Men, I thought
 it proper to enquire in the third Place.

III. *Thirdly,*

Efficacy of Prayer.

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SERM.
II.

III. *Thirdly*, WHAT those Conditions are with which Prayer ought to be qualified, and by which its Power is so far limited, that it cannot be effectual without them. And the general Qualification requir'd in all our Prayers is, that they be in all Points conformable to the Will of God. For, as St. *John* says, *This is the Confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any Thing according to his Will, he heareth us.* And if we know that he heareth us, whatsoever we ask, (*i. e.* in Conformity to his holy Will) we know that we have the Petition that we desired of him. And this amounts to as great a Degree of Certainty, as can well consist with the Sovereignty of God, and our Dependence upon him, or indeed with our own Safety, and Happiness.

FOR if there be nothing in the Matter of our Prayers, that interferes with his blessed Will, nothing in the Manner, or in our own Hearts that provokes him to turn away his Face from us, we may be assured, nay we know it (for we have his sacred Word for our Security, and his Holy Spirit

SER M. Spirit as the Earnest) that we shall obtain
 II. our Requests. And what could God have
 done more for us, unless he had given the
 Power out of his own Hands, and made
 us perfectly our own Carvers; which, for
 the Sake of his own Honour he could
 not; which out of Tenderneſs to his poor
 impotent Creatures he would not do.

THIS therefore is the general Qualifica-
 tion of Prayer, that it be agreeable to the
 Will of God; and the particular Condi-
 tions ariſing out of this may reſpect,

Fiſt, THE Matter of the Petitions.

Secondly, THE State of the Petitioner.

Thirdly, THE Manner of his Addreſs.

AND *Fiſt*, as to the Matter of our Pe-
 titions, it ought always to be lawful and
 good, fit and expedient; neither interfering
 with God's wiſe Counſels, and juſt De-
 crees, nor obſtructing his greater Glory,
 or the greater Good, and Benefit of the
 Petitioner.

AND before all Things it ought to be
 lawful, that is, conſonant to the Laws of
 God; for what is not ſo, is not, cannot be
 according to his Will; for his Law is the
 Declaration of his Will. And for any Man

to offer up a Petition of this Nature, is to engage God's Providence (as far as lies in his Power) against his Precepts; and in all Humility to entreat him to dispense with the breaking of his own Laws.

AND he that shall dare to do this knowingly, is a presumptuous Wretch, and his Prayers are an Abomination: And if he does it ignorantly, he cannot be acquitted of Rashness, in that his Heart is so hasty to utter any Thing before God, of the Lawfulness of which he has taken no Care to be satisfied. For that Ignorance is in Effect no better than Presumption, that is purely owing to want of due Care, and Consideration. For Instance; he that prays for an Inheritance, to which he has the Right in Reversion, does, by Implication, pray for the Death of the present Possessor; and whosoever can find in his Heart to pray for the Death of any Man, would certainly compass it if he could; and therefore he is intentionally guilty of Murder; and it will avail him but little to say, that he consider'd not the Evil of it; for it is his great Fault that he did not; and besides, a very small Degree of Attention

S E R M. might have served to convince him, that
 II. such Prayers must needs be unlawful; and
 therefore this his Ignorance must needs be
 voluntary, and affected.

It ought therefore to be our first Care, that the Matter of our Petitions be only what is lawful. But

Secondly, It is not enough that it be barely lawful, unless it be also good; *i. e.* not only consistent with God's Mind and Will, but acceptable, and well-pleasing in his Sight, and such as he himself would require.

AND of this we may sufficiently inform ourselves, partly from the Instructions that our Lord has left behind him, and partly from the Nature, and Reason of the Things themselves.

FOR since that most absolute Form of Prayer, which our Saviour taught his Disciples, is left upon Record for our Instruction, and Direction, we may rest ourselves satisfied, that in using those divine, and pregnant Words, and framing our own Conceptions after that perfect Model, we do offer unto God the most grateful Oblation that can be offer'd, because 'tis punctually

Efficacy of Prayer.

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ctually the same that he himself has appointed. SERM.
II.

BESIDES, as the Particulars of that Prayer (excepting one that provides for the Necessities of Life) do chiefly, if not solely, concern our spiritual Estate, and everlasting Welfare; so we may take it for granted, that our Petitions for spiritual Blessings will constantly be heard. For these are the good Things for which God's Promise stands more expressly engaged; *How much more* (says St. Luke) *shall the heavenly Father give the holy Spirit to them* ^{Luke xi; 13.} *that ask him:* And these are the good Things which are perfectly unallay'd, and free from all Mixture of Evil; and which therefore are entirely, and at all Times well-pleasing unto God, and equally profitable unto Men; for which Reason we can never be too immoderate in our Desires of them, never too solicitous for their Continuance, and Encrease. No! there is no Fear of Error, or Offence on that Hand, unless Men could apprehend themselves to be in Danger of being more pious, more humble, more temperate, more just, more charitable, and in all Respects

D 2

more

SER M. more righteous, and perfect than *Christia-*
 II. *nity* requires.

BUT this being a Fear that is purely imaginary, it will become all such as know the Will of God, and approve Things that are more excellent, to covet *them* also, as the best Gifts that God can bestow upon them; and to pray accordingly for Growth in Grace, for a further Proficiency in Godliness, and a final Perseverance in it, to be crown'd at last with eternal Happiness. And who so prayeth, as he ought, for these Things, shall never fail of the Success that he desires; nay, he shall obtain the Over-plus of God's Bounty, in Virtue of that comfortable Promise: *Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and the Righteousness thereof, and all these Things (i. e. all Things necessary, or convenient for this Life) shall be added unto you.* Which Promise, so far forth as it concerns spiritual Things, is absolute, and unconditional; but, as for the Addition of other Things not so necessary, it is to be submitted wholly to the Wisdom, and good Pleasure of God. For

Matth. vi.
33.

Thirdly, It is also requisite, that the Matter of our Petitions should be what is
 fit

Efficacy of Prayer.

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S E R M.
II.

fit and expedient; fit for God to grant, as not interfering with his wise, and just Decrees, nor obstructing his greater Glory; and expedient for us to receive, as being likely to prove beneficial to us, and no Prejudice to any greater Good that God may design for us. And 'tis but reasonable, sure, to entrust all our Affairs in the Hands of infinite Wisdom, and infinite Goodness, and contentedly to suffer God to dispose of what's his own, as he shall see best to conduce to his Glory, and the real Benefit of the Receiver. And it would be most unreasonable, and absurd to expect any Thing from him upon any other Terms but these.

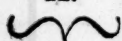
FOR Example, when God had solemnly sworn, *that those who had provoked him for forty Years together, should not enter into his Rest*; neither the Intercession of *Moses*, nor their own Prayers, could prevail with God to reverse the fatal Sentence. Nor was it fit they should; for by the Addition of an Oath it was pass'd into an immutable Decree; nor was it consistent with his Veracity after that to revoke it.

D 3

THUS

SERM.

II.



THUS again, when any People, or Nation are grown exorbitantly wicked, and have filled up that Measure of Iniquity, which God had decreed to punish with utter Extirpation; I say, when that desperate Crisis once is come, the Decree also becomes irrevocable; and though *Moses* and *Samuel*, *Noah*, *Daniel*, and *Job* should stand before God, to be their Advocates, it could do them no Service.

FOR, besides the Immutability of God's Counsel, he is in Honour concern'd to sanctify his great Name, and to demonstrate his Justice, and his Holiness in the exemplary Punishment of such Sinners, as are obstinate, and irreclaimable.

So likewise in the Case of *David*, when he had been guilty, both of Murder, and Adultery, although God upon his hearty Contrition did put away his Sin, and spare his Life, yet it was peremptorily denounced against him by *Nathan* the Prophet; that, because by his Deed *he had given* great Occasion to the Enemies of the Lord to blaspheme; the Child that was born unto him, should surely die. And although *David* besought

2 Sam. xii.

14.

besought God for the Child, and fasted, S E R M.
and lay all Night on the Earth; yet ne- II.
vertheless the Child died; for so it was
decreed, both for the Vindication of God's
Providence against the Blasphemers, and
the more sensible, and salutary Punishment
of the Offender.

IT is by no Means fitting therefore, and
consequently neither is it to be expected,
that the holy, and true God should hear,
and answer the Requests of his sinful
Creatures, any farther than it may stand
with his just Decrees, or contribute to the
Advancement of his Glory.

NOR will the Wisdom of God, no nor
his Goodness neither, suffer him to be so
easy to his Creatures, as to grant what
they ask, unless it be really expedient for
them. He may indeed give them in his
Wrath, what it is both their Folly, and
their Sin to ask (for so he gave the *I/-*
raelites a King;) but in Mercy he will not
hear their Petitions against themselves, un-
less he be first provok'd to't by their Dis-
ingenuity, and Ingratitude.

AND this is the great Privilege, and Se-
curity of the humble, and the thankful

S E R M. *Christian*, that, if he resigns himself to
 II. God, he shall be deliver'd, even from his
 own Prayers, and not be undone by his
 own foolish Choice. And perhaps, this is
 none of the least of God's Mercies; if we
 consider how little we are acquainted with
 ourselves, and what short Views we have
 of Things, and how impetuous, and head-
 strong those Passions are, that for the most
 Part usurp the Place of Reason. For, I
 verily believe, if it were possible for every
 Man to be his own Chuser, and to be Ma-
 ster of all the fond Fancies that cherish
 vain Desire, it would be the greatest Curse
 that God could inflict upon Mankind.

It is undoubtedly therefore our happy
 Lot, that we are in the Disposal of the
 great Creator, and Preserver of Men, who
 knows whereof we are made, and remem-
 bers that we are but Dust; and is in Re-
 ality a better Friend to us, than we could
 be to ourselves; wisely suiting his Gifts,
 and proportioning our Allowance to our
 proper Wants, and each Man's different
 Capacity; of which we ourselves are very
 incompetent Judges at best; besides, that

we

Efficacy of Prayer.

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we are oftentimes misled by blind, and ungovern'd Appetite. SERM.
II.

BUT the Goodness of God is still more conspicuous in withholding those Things that are really good; but with a gracious Intention to make an abundant Compensation for them by something that is far better; and most of all causing *all Things*, even when they are at the worst, and have the most unpromising Aspect, to *work together for good, to those that love him*. For such Denials, such Disappointments, what are they but the greatest, and most illustrious Proofs of that particular, and tender Care, which God has of the Righteous, and the Watchfulness of his Providence over them?

THUS when *David* prayed so earnestly for the Life of his Child, which if God had so pleas'd, might have been a Blessing to him, he was not gratify'd in that Request, but in the Pardon of his Sin he was, which was much the greater Favour of the two; and perhaps the Death of the Child might help to make his Humiliation the deeper, and to turn his *Sorrow into Repentance, not to be repented of*. Thus *St. Paul* prayed thrice,

S E R M. thrice, that the *Thorn in the Flesh* should

II.

z Cor. xii.

8.

depart from him: And though his Prayer was not granted in Kind, yet he receiv'd what was more than an equivalent for it; namely, the Grace of God, together with an immediate Revelation, concerning its Sufficiency. *And he said unto me, my Grace is sufficient for thee; for my Strength is made perfect in Weakness.*

z Cor. xii.

9.

Thus, when *Christ* pray'd, but with an entire Resignation to his Father's Sovereign good Pleasure; *that, if possible, the Cup might pass away from him*; although that was not possible to be granted, as being otherwise determined in the Fore-knowledge of God; yet the Angels were sent to strengthen him, and the Spirit was given him without Measure, to support his Humanity under that bitter Agony, and the bloody Death of which it was the Fore-runner. And this, doubtless, was infinitely more to his Satisfaction, as being the Means of promoting the *Glory of God on high*, and procuring his *good Will towards Men on Earth*, which was the great End, and Design of his coming into the World.

AND

Efficacy of Prayer.

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S E R M.

II.

AND, from the particular Reasons alledg'd, and the several Instances by which they have been confirm'd, I think it is plain, that the Matter of our Petitions ought to be *First* lawful, that is, at least, not contrary to his Will; and *Secondly*, good, that is, in its own Nature desirable, and such as God will accept; *Thirdly*, fit with Respect to God, that is, such as he can grant consistently with his own Glory, and the fix'd Determination of his just Decrees; and expedient with Respect to Men; that is, suitable for them in their several Circumstances, and without being an Impediment to any greater Good, that may be intended, and reserved for them.

IF our Petitions be not for the Matter, such as these, no Wonder, if we often meet with a Repulse; nay, 'tis a Mercy that we do. But if such they be, and we also be such as we ought to be; then, and not otherwise, may we expect to be hear'd, and answer'd. For

Secondly, IT is also requir'd, that the State of the Petitioner, be that of a righteous Man; *for 'tis the effectual, fervent Prayer*

SERMON. *Prayer of the righteous Man* (and him on-

II. ly) *that availeth with God.* But by a
 Jam.v. 16. righteous Man, we are not here to under-

stand him, that is perfectly without Sin,
 and innocent, and blameless in all Respects.

Ecclef. vii. 20. *For there is not a just Man upon Earth,
 that doeth good, and sinneth not.* And if

any Man should approach God in Prayer,
 big with this *Pharisaical* Conceit; even the
Publican and the *Sinner*, as that Parable

Luke xviii. 14. *in the Gospel assures us, shall be justified
 before him.* It is not therefore perfect,

and spotless Righteousness that is requir'd
 in the Petitioner, nor is it every Sinner
 whose Prayer will be rejected. *For if any*

1 John ii. 1. *Man sin, (and that we all have) we have
 an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ
 the righteous, and he is the Propitiation for*

Ephes. iv. 12. *our Sins. And in him we have Boldness
 and Access, being justified by Faith in his*

*Blood, upon the Terms of the Gospel Co-
 venant; that is, the forsaking our Sins.
 And the Effect of this Justification is, that
 such our Sins are no more imputed to us,
 but perfectly blotted out, and our Persons
 graciously accepted, and accounted, as right-*

teous

Efficacy of Prayer.

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teous in the Sight of God. And this *E-SERM.*
vangelical Righteousness, implying a firm II.
and well-grounded Faith in the Merits,
and Mediation of *Christ*, an unfeigned Re-
pentance for our Sins past, and a stedfast
Purpose of Amendment for the future, is
that, without which the Petitioner ought
not to present himself before God; for we
know that God heareth not Sinners; but
if any Man believeth in him, and in the
Name of his only begotten Son, and en-
deavours to do his Will in the Sincerity of
his Heart, him he heareth. This there-
fore ought to be the State of the Petitioner.
But

Thirdly, THE Conditions respecting the
Manner of his Address, may be reduc'd to
these that follow.

First, HUMILITY and Reverence. For
a Sinner, let him be never so truly peni-
tent for his Sins, will find in the bare Re-
membrance of them, sufficient Reason to
be humbled, even in his own Eyes, as
having acted against his truest Interest, and
clearest Reason, as well as all his Obliga-
tions of Duty and Gratitude. But cer-
tainly,

SERMON. tainly, when he comes to confess them in
 II. Prayer, he ought to abase himself still more
 in the Sight of God, revering his dread Majesty, whom he hath been so bold, and wicked as to offend, and adoring his infinite Mercy that is still ready to accept his Repentance.

Secondly, A stedfast and unshaken Faith; by which I mean a perfect Reliance upon the Goodness, and Truth, and All-sufficiency of God, through the Mercies of *Jesus Christ*, without any Diffidence of Success, or any Solitude about the Event; but to be sure, without any Recourse to other un sanctified, or unwarrantable Means.

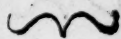
BUT this Faith does not imply a confident Belief, that we shall infallibly obtain the very Thing we pray for; for there is not always Room, nor Ground for such a Confidence; and to think that a groundless Belief were any Recommendation of our Prayers unto God, is an unreasonable Presumption. All that is implied therefore in the Faith here requir'd, is a general Affiance in God, waiting with all modest Assurance for the Answer to our Prayers,

Efficacy of Prayer.

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S E R M.

II.



ers, but referring the particular Time, and Method to his all-wise Providence, who careth for us, and adhering wholly to him without Fear, or Doubt; or indeed without any other Hopes, but in the good Blessing of God upon our lawful Endeavours. This is that which St. *James* calls *asking in Faith*, and opposes to *Wavering*, by which he means that perpetual Agitation, and Unsettledness, which perplexes a Mind that is divided between God, and the World. *But let not that Man think*, who cannot find in his Heart to trust in God, but will be leaning to other Dependances, *let not that Man think* (says the *Apostle*) *that he shall receive any Thing of the Lord.* James i. 7.

Thirdly, EARNESTNESS and Perseverance; for to this End was that Parable of the importunate Widow, and the unjust Judge, deliver'd, as St. *Luke* tells us, *That Men ought always to pray, and not to faint:* Luk. xviii.

And the rest of the Parables that have any Relation to Prayer, are much of the same Importance. Not that it can be imagin'd, that God is to be wearied out by our pressing Importunities, or that his

1

Blessings

S E R M. Blessings should be thus extorted from him:
 II. But 'tis the best Testimony we can give of
 an affectionate, and obedient Heart; especially, when our Affections are proportion'd to the real Worth, and Excellency of Things, and are regulated by the Will of God: That is to say, when we pray, as we are directed in his Word, for spiritual Things with the greatest Vehemency, and Fervour, and for temporal with more Indifference, and Moderation; for those Things that are absolutely good, with an absolute Desire; and for those Things that bear the Appearance of Good, but do not always prove so in the Issue, with an entire Resignation to God's Wisdom, and Goodness.

AND it is also requir'd, that we continue instant in Prayer, and daily reinforce our Petitions, when God thinks good to delay his Answer, and keep our Hopes long in Suspense. For to have Faith towards God, when he withholds not the Request of our Lips, but even prevents us with the Blessings of his Goodness, is no such difficult Attainment. But then is the proper Trial and Exercise of our Faith, when the Lord
 seems

seem slack, as concerning his Promises, S E R M.
and to hide his Face away from us; and II.
if then we entertain no Doubt, nor Distrust of his Truth, and Goodness, but
persist in our Prayers, without wavering,
or fainting; this is acceptable in his Sight,
and will above all Things recommend us
to his Favour.

Fourthly and *Lastly*, A Cleanness of
Heart and Hands; that is to say, such a
Degree of Purity, and Innocence, both in
our Thoughts, and Actions, as may ap-
prove us to be sincere, and upright to-
wards God. And this implies either an
absolute Freedom from all gross, and no-
torious Sins, or at least a deep Repentance
for them, and a total Renunciation of
them. For sure of all Things it is not
meet that those very Hands, which are
spread forth towards Heaven, should be
concern'd in Fraud, Rapine or Blood;
that the very same *Tongue* should be
the double Instrument of *blessing God,*
and cursing Men; that the same *Eyes* should
at once be full of Devotion, and *Adultery*:
That the same Heart should pour out its
own Filthiness and Rancour, together

SERMON with its *Prayers* before the high, and holy one. No! these are Incongruities that can never be reconcil'd; these are Defilements that must needs make Prayer itself abominable in the Sight of God. But if we would approach his Presence with any good Hope of being accepted, we must cleanse our Hands, and purify our Hearts, and study to *be holy as he is holy*.

AND thus if we draw nigh unto God, he also will draw nigh unto us. If we draw nigh unto him with an humble Reverence, an obediential Faith, a persevering Trust, and a Sincerity of Heart, labouring still more and more after Perfection; then will he draw nigh unto us, both in his common Favour, and Protection, and his special Benediction, and Assistance, both in the full Pardon of our Sin, and the free Gift of all other good Things. And *now* unto him that is able, (and upon these Terms willing) to do exceeding abundantly for us, above all we ask or think, according to the Power that worketh in us. Unto him be Glory in the Church by Christ Jesus, throughout all Ages, World without End. Amen.

Ephes. iii.
20, 21.

SERMON



S E R M O N III.

Of the Necessity of Prayer.

LUKE xi. I, 2, &c.

*And it came to pass, that as he was
praying in a certain Place, when
he ceased, one of his Disciples
said unto him, Lord, teach us to
pray, as John also taught his
Disciples.*

*And he said unto them, When ye
pray, say, Our Father, &c.*



IN these Words we have re- S E R M.
corded the gracious Conde- III.
scension of our *blessed Saviour*,
to an humble, and pious Re-
quest of one of his Followers, in behalf of
E 2 himself,

SER M. himself, and the rest of his Brethren.
 III. He had observ'd, no Doubt, how frequent, and instant his Master was in Prayer, and being now with him in his devout Retirement, it seasonably suggested to his Thoughts, how necessary, and important the Duty was in itself, and how requisite it would be to receive *his* Directions, in order to the better Performance of it, who was so constantly exercis'd in it *himself*, and had given them such admirable Instructions in other Things.

AND besides, he had heard, it should seem, that St. *John* had deliver'd a particular Form of Prayer to his Disciples, to be superadded to their ordinary Devotions, as was also customary with the *Jewish Doctors*.

AND this, 'tis probable, might kindle a holy Emulation in his Breast, and a Zeal for his Master's Honour, not being willing to come behind in any Gift, nor that the Disciples of *John* should in any Thing be thought to excel the Disciples of *Jesus*.

Now whether the Disciple that was so zealously affected in this Matter, was present at the Sermon upon the *Mount*, or

no: Whether he remembred how particularly *Christ* had instructed them to pray, at that Time: Or whether he, or any of the rest did apprehend his Meaning right, is not so certain.

S E R M.
III.

HOWEVER it be; against the Time that *Jesus* had finish'd his *Oraisons*, he was ready with this Petition, (which the rest by their Silence, seem to concur in) *Lord teach us to pray.*

OUR Lord, without reproving *him* for his Impertinence, or the rest for their Dullness, and Forgetfulness, immediately condescends to his Request, and rehearſes the very ſame Prayer, which he had before preſcrib'd to them upon the Mount; as being a Form ſo compleat, a Pattern ſo exact, that no other need, no better could be given; comprizing at once all that was either needful, or fit to pray for, and conſequently ſupplying all that could be defective, and rectifying what might be amiſs, in the ſtated Prayers then in Uſe among the *Jews*, which were of humane Compoſure.

AND 'tis obſervable, that though the Prayer here deliver'd, be the ſame in Sub-

S E R M. stance with that in *Matth.* vi. yet there is
 III. some Variation in the Manner of Delivery.

For there the *Doxology* is inserted, and in the Close of all *Amen* is added; here both are omitted. But this Variation serves still to prove that the Form itself was design'd for general Use, as being equally adapted, both for public, and private Occasions. For in the public Service of the Temple, after the Priest had concluded his Prayers, it was the constant Usage for the People to make their Responses aloud, magnifying God's Kingdom, and Power, and to say *Amen* to the whole: But this (as Dr. *Lightfoot*, a Man singularly skill'd in *Jewish* Customs, informs us) they were not wont to do, in reciting their *Phylacteries*, and their private Ejaculations.

It is further observable, that our *Saviour* did not hereby intend to discountenance, or supersede the ordinary Forms then receiv'd among the *Jews*. So far from this, that he is suppos'd by *Grotius*, and other learned Men, still to speak with the Church; nay, 'tis thought that this very Prayer, which he taught his Disciples, does consist of some certain choice Passages,

ges, which he in his Wisdom had selected SERM.
III.
out of the *Jewish* Elders, and Doctors, and
compil'd into one perfect, but compendious
Form, to be the Summary, and Standard
of our *Christian* Devotions.

AND having thus stated the Matter of
Fact, as it stands recorded here in my
Text; and illustrated it with some occa-
sional Observations, that may be of use a-
gain by and by; I shall proceed upon this
Foundation in my following Discourse,
and shew,

I. *First*, THE Necessity of Prayer it
self.

II. *Secondly*, OUR Disability to pray (as
we ought) without we be instructed, and
assisted from above.

III. *Thirdly*, I SHALL endeavour to e-
vince the Lawfulness, and Expediency of
Forms of Prayer in general.

IV. *Fourthly*, and *Lastly*, THE Reaso-
nableness of complying with such Forms,
as are prescrib'd, and receiv'd; provided
they contain nothing unlawful in parti-
cular.

S E R M.

III.

I. First, I SHALL shew the Necessity of Prayer. By Prayer I understand, that complicated Act of Devotion, wherein we more immediately address ourselves to God, humbling ourselves before him in Confession of Sins, and with unfeigned Contrition imploring his Pardon; beseeching him out of his Grace, and Bounty to supply all our Needs, spiritual and temporal; and interceding in like Manner for others, as we do for ourselves, and giving him Thanks, and Praise for all the Blessings we have at any Time receiv'd, with the same Humility of Soul, that we ask for what we want.

Now this, I say, is of absolute Necessity, whether we respect God, or ourselves. If we respect God, 'tis our bounden Duty, and Service; if ourselves, 'tis a Means without which we can neither expect to live comfortably here, nor to be happy hereafter. And that 'tis a Duty which we owe to God is abundantly evident. Because

First, It is engraven in our very Hearts, and is the Dictate of Nature itself. Every living Thing indeed has naturally some
fort

Of the Necessity of Prayer.

17

fort of Sense of its own Deficiency, and is S E R M.
prompted from within to seek out for III.
suitable Supplies. And even Instinct has
furnish'd the Brutes with some certain
dumb Signs, which yet serve to express
their Wants, with a kind of Rhetoric, that
looks like earnest Supplication, and does
not misbecome the Suppliant.

BUT Man, being endued with Reason,
and Freedom of Will, is more intimately
sensible of the Dependency, and Impo-
tency of his Condition; and, which is
worse, of the inbred Corruption, and ac-
tual Pollution of his Nature; and this di-
rects him to flee for Succour to the first,
supreme, independent Cause of all Things,
the Fountain of his Being, and Happiness, in
whose Favour there is Life, and whose An-
ger is more bitter than Death; and the most
natural Way of Address that he can think
of, is humbly to prostrate himself in Prayer,
deprecating the divine Displeasure, and
suing for Pardon, and Acceptance; and the
Continuance of his manifold, and tender
Mercies.

AND accordingly this has ever been the
universal Practice of Mankind; for (as we
read)

S E R M. read) even *then Men began to call upon the*

III.

Name of the Lord. And the very Super-
Gen. iv. stition of the *Heathens* bears Witness to this
26.

Truth. For they, though they were wretchedly mistaken in the Object of their Worship, and though they deify'd almost every Thing animate, and inanimate, and even empty sounds, and whatsoever they could imagine might prove either hurtful, or beneficial to them; yet still they pray'd, when there was no Ear to hear, nor Voice to answer. And to this, no Question, they were first directed by the Light of Nature; *though because when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, they afterwards became vain in their Imaginations, and their foolish Heart was darkned.*

Rom. i.
21.

Secondly, PRAYER is a Duty, which we owe to God, and therefore necessary; because 'tis the highest Act of Adoration, implying an awful Sense, and due Apprehensions of God's Attributes, and Perfections; accompany'd with suitable Affections, and Demeanour towards him. For in praying to him, at all Times, and in all Places, and upon all Emergencies; we acknowledge his infinite Knowledge, and Presence

Of the Necessity of Prayer.

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sence, and Power; and this begets Faith, SERM.
III.
and Reverence. In confessing our Sins, and imploring his Pardon, we own his Holiness, and Justice, and Dominion; and at the same Time extol his Mercy; and this works in us a godly Fear temper'd with Love, and calls for our present Repentance, and future Obedience: In applying to *him* for Relief in all our Necessities; we testify our Belief of his Goodness in general, and his particular Providence; and in making Intercession for others, we set forth his All-sufficiency; and this helps to encrease our Faith, and Love, and strengthen our Confidence: In rendring him Thanks for all his Benefits, we make his Praise glorious, and give Testimony of our own Ingenuity; and this keeps up the Sense of our continual Dependance still in our Minds, and makes all our religious Affections warm, and vigorous. In a Word, (as it appears in all these Instances) Prayer is a most essential Part of the Worship of God; and therefore a necessary Duty.

Thirdly, PRAYER is a Duty which we owe to God; for it falls under direct Precept, both in the *Old Testament*, and the *New*.

S E R M. *New.* What could be more express, than
 III. that in the 50th Psalm, *Offer unto God*
 Ver. 14. *Thanksgiving, and pay thy Vows unto the*
 15. *most High. And call upon me, in the Day of*
Trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt
glorify me?

AND how often does our blessed Saviour command his Disciples, to pray? How often does he awaken them out of their Sloath, and Supineness, to a diligent Performance of it, saying, *pray, watch and pray, rise and pray, &c.* And this likewise is inculcated very frequently by the Apo-
 1 Pet. iv. *stles; Watch unto Prayer,* says St. Peter,
 7. *Pray without ceasing,* says St. Paul. And
 1 Theff. v. *we are once for all, both convinced*
 17. *of the Necessity of it, and incited to the*
Practice, by the Example of our Lord
himself. For he, who thought it became
him, to fulfil all Righteousness, both legal,
 and moral; whilst he was in the Flesh, he also pray'd; and had been praying at that Time, when the Disciple came to him with this Petition in the Text, and this shews, that Prayer is of indispensable Necessity.

AND

Of the Necessity of Prayer.

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S E R M.

III.

AND if it be so, (as it has appear'd from the Reason already alledg'd, *viz.* as it is agreeable to the Light of Nature, as 'tis a principal Branch of the divine Adoration, which we are bound to pay to God, as it is expressly commanded in Scripture, and enforc'd moreover by the Example of the holy *Jesus*) I say, if so it be, what shall we think of those Men, who confine all Religion to good, honest Morality, as they call it, and look upon the outward Acts of religious Worship, as mere Formalities, of no Price at all in the Sight of God? And for this of Prayer in particular, they are not able to discern, how it should be so necessary, for as much as God is infinitely wise, and knows all our Wants, and Desires, without the Impertinence of an Information; and infinitely good, and has always the same Propensity to do us good, without any importunate Solicitation.

I DON'T wonder, I confess, that the Men who are thus persuaded, should neglect to pray: For Prayer in their Mouths, would be indeed, what they say it is, a mere Formality. But methinks at the same Time, to magnify God's Wisdom, and Goodness,
in

S E R M. in Derogation to his sovereign Power, is
 III. no more a becoming, than 'tis a concluding Argument. *And to deny him the Honour due unto his holy Name*, out of a pretended Fear, lest they should dishonour him (forsooth!) by obeying him; is a piece of Mockery, that savours Rank of Prophaneness.

Matth. vi. 8. 'Tis true indeed, *God knows what Things we have need of, before we ask*; (as we find it.) But shall we not therefore ask? To what Purpose then is there a Form of Prayer immediately subjoin'd? If it be altogether needless, as some pretend, I am sure it is not *to magnify the Wisdom of God*.

'Tis equally true, what we read in the next Chapter, that *if we know how to give good Gifts to our Children, much more shall our Father, which is in Heaven, give good Things; but to whom?* still to them *that ask him*; not to the presumptuous, and unthankful.

Chap. vii. 11.

AND although our Prayers cannot be thought to inform God, nor our Importunities (properly) to move him; yet he wisely, and justly requires both at our Hands,

Of the Necessity of Prayer.

63

Hands, as well for his own Honour, as S E R M.
our Benefit. For his own Honour, as 'tis III.
a Homage due to the Lord of Heaven
and Earth, from his Creatures, and Vassals.

AND for our Benefit, as it serves to exercise our Faith, enflame our Zeal, and make us truly humble, and thankful.

AND if any still think, that Prayer is but an unnecessary Thing, let them at least forgive me this one Prayer, " That
" they may not be everlastingly depriv'd
" of that Grace, which now they slight,
" and despise! that they *may not ask, when*
" *there is none to give, nor seek, when 'tis*
" *too late to find! nor knock, when the Door*
" *is shut, and cry Lord, Lord, open unto*
" *us; and that they may never receive*
" *the fatal Answer, I know ye not; to their*
" *own eternal Confusion.*" But to proceed,

Secondly, If we respect ourselves, Prayer is no less necessary; as being a Means without which we can neither expect to live comfortably here, nor to be happy hereafter.

FOR Man is frail, and feeble in his
Consti-

SERM. Constitution: His Soul, and Body are held together by subtle Bands, which are easily loos'd: His Life is a very tender Thing, oftentimes broken, like a Bubble, by the very Air that gives it Bulk, and Being. In a Word, we live in continual Care, and Fear, and are expos'd to many Wants, and many Dangers; Wants which we cannot supply out of our own Store; and Dangers, which we cannot prevent, by our own Foresight.

AND, in all this wretched Plight, we are still naturally desirous of Happiness, and eagerly pursue it in a thousand Shapes, *disquieting ourselves in vain*; for there is no Solidity, no Stability, no Satisfaction in these earthly Things. And after all, the Providence of God, and the Light of his Countenance, must be our only Stay, and Comfort, our last Recourse must be to Heaven; and if thither we would go, *behold the Ladder!* Prayer is that alone, which keeps up the Intercourse between Heaven, and Earth, by which we may present ourselves before the Throne of Grace, and make our Requests known unto God, in Hopes that the *God which beareth Prayer, will not hide his*

Gen.
xxviii. 12.

Of the Necessity of Prayer.

65

his Face, from those who diligently seek S E R M.
III.
him.

AND so we might reasonably hope, were there no other Impediment. But alas! our Sins have interpos'd between God and us, and set us at an infinite Distance from him. We are all Transgressors of his Law, and Debtors to his Justice, and consequently liable to his Wrath, and Vengeance. And this heavy Burden added to our natural Infirmities, must needs plunge us deeper still in Misery, and amaze us with the Terrors of a guilty Mind, and a *certain fearful looking for of Judgment, and fiery Indignation.* AND the only Remedy we have left in this Case, is to repent us heartily of our Sins, and pray to God graciously to pardon them, and by a well grounded Faith to lay hold on the Merits of *Jesus Christ*, who is our Propitiation. And if upon these Terms *we confess our Sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our Sins, and cleanse us from all Unrighteousness.* 1 Ep.
John i. 9.

BUT yet, even after we are thus recover'd, we are not free from Danger; and it will be needful still to *watch and pray,*

VOL. III.

F

lest

SERM. *lest we enter into Temptation; for though*
 III. *the Spirit indeed be willing, yet the Flesh is*
 weak; and so long as we are encompassed
 with it, its Lusts will certainly entice us,
 its Frailties will be ready to betray us,
 and Satan by this Means will endeavour to
 ensnare us; and therefore we have still
 need to pray more and more, that the
 Grace of God may be sufficient for us,
 and that our Strength may be made per-
 fect in Weakness: And this is what the
 very best of Men will find themselves ne-
 cessarily oblig'd to; for as the Apostle
 Rom. iii. says, *There is no Difference; for all have*
 23, &c.
 I Cor. x. *sinned, and are come short of the Glory of*
 12. *God; and let him that standeth, take Heed*
lest he fall.

So great, so indispensable is the Necessity of Prayer; whether we consider ourselves as Men, or as Sinners; as Sojourners here on Earth, or as Probationers for Eternity; for without it we can have no Hopes, or Assurance of God's Protection, or Pardon, and consequently must live without Comfort, in this World, and in endless Misery in the World to come.

AND

AND if thus it be, what shall we say S E R M.
III.
to those Men, who pretend to be above these mean Dispensations, and Ordinances: Who, if they allow Prayer to be fit for Babes, yet they cannot think it requisite for those of full Age, who have their Senses exercis'd in *better Things*; who hold a more intimate Communion with God, and dwell with him in the Heights of Contemplation: Who enjoy the immediate Irradiations of his Light, and Participations of his Love, and the Indwellings of his Spirit.

BUT surely Presumption is not in the Number of the *Christian* Virtues. Nor can I think, that they have any Title to the extraordinary Measures of God's Grace, who will not accept of what is sufficient for them, in the ordinary Ways of Conveyance.

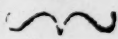
AND therefore let not these vain *Boasters* thank God, that they are not as other Men are; when that which makes them to differ is something that borders upon Madness: Let them not wrap themselves up in *Enthusiastical* Nonsense, nor make themselves fiery Chariots of a warm Imagination,

SER M. tion, nor idolize their own spiritual Pride

III. To be plain, *let them not be high-minded, but fear*: Let them consider that the best, and perfectest Saint on Earth is still but a Man; and subject to the same Passions, and Failings with the rest of Mankind, and that 'tis next to impossible for him, even *tho' he watch unto Prayer* continually, always to guard against the sudden Incurfions of Temptation, the Deceitfulness of his own Heart, and the secret Stratagems of *Satan*.

LET them farther consider, that the *blessed Jesus was himself also in all Points, tempted like unto us, though without Sin*, and that therefore he was very frequent, and instant in Prayer, leaving us an Example, and furnishing us *with Armour to resist all the fiery Darts of the Devil*.

LET them observe him particularly in his last Agony, how fervently, how passionately he pray'd, *Father, if it be possible, let this Cup pass away from me; nevertheless not my Will, but thine be done*. And thus he pray'd, not only because he was under the most afflicting Sense of his Father's heavy Displeasure, but because his

mere Humanity was not able to bear up S E R M.
without special Assistance; for we may find III.
by the Manner of his acquitting himself, 
that Flesh and Blood will shrink at such
Things, and that 'tis with some Difficulty,
that the Will of the most innocent Man,
is brought to a perfect Resignation to the
Will of God, in such severe Trials.

AND there is no Body, I believe, almost,
but who in his *Christian Warfare*, meets with
such Trials at least, as he finds enough to
exercise his whole Stock of Courage, and
Patience.

AND, if any Man after all this can think,
that he is too spiritual to pray, or that he
is above the Use of such Means; he must
think sure at the same Time (if that were
possible) that he is neither subject to Sin,
nor Misery.

AND now proceed we to the *second* ge-
neral Head, *viz.*

II. *Secondly*, To shew our Disability to
pray for any Thing as we ought, unless
we be instructed, and assisted from above,
which was the Reason to be sure, of this

SERM. Request here in my Text, *Lord teach us*
 III. *to pray.*

AND there is absolute Need we should be taught,

First, BECAUSE we are ignorant of the Will of God, and know not in what Manner to offer our Prayers, so as they may be accepted.

Secondly, BECAUSE we are ignorant in a great Measure of our own Condition, and what will be best for us.

AND *Thirdly*, THERE is great Need we should be assisted too, because we are utterly unable of ourselves to raise up our Affections to such a Pitch, as will suit with so holy, and heavenly an Exercise.

AND *First* I say, there is absolute Need we should be instructed in this Duty, because we are ignorant of the Will of God, and know not how to offer our Prayers, so as may be acceptable to him. 'Tis true indeed (as has been before observ'd) that every Man who labours under the Sense of his Sins and Infirmities, seems to be immediately determin'd (without the Help of a Teacher) to seek his Remedy in Prayer.

'TIS

without Assistance from above.

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"Tis the Suggestion of Nature itself; S E R M. III.
his own guilty Fears, and pressing Wants
force him upon his Knees, and the No-
tion he has of God, as his merciful Crea-
tor, makes the Practice look like reason-
able.

BUT alas! when he begins to reflect
that he, who is now in the Guise of an
humble Petitioner, is in God's purer Eyes
a bold, and heinous Offender, what
Grounds can he have to hope, that his
Prayers shall be favourably receiv'd, hav-
ing nothing of Price sufficient to satisfy the
Justice of God, or atone his Displeasure?
Here therefore the natural Man is at a
Loss, and cannot tell how to proceed, un-
less he be instructed from above; for 'tis
Revelation alone, that can put him in the
Way of rendring the Prayers of a sinful
Man *acceptable, and well-pleasing to God.*

AND of this the *Jews*, under their Dis-
pensation, had some obscurer Notices, so
far forth as the Sacrifices (which were also
Rites of Supplication *) were ordain'd by

* Vide Med. Pag. 482.

S E R M. God to be Types, and Pledges of that

III. Offering upon the Cross, which *Christ* was afterwards to make for the Sins of the World. And 'tis from that Offering once offer'd, that the legal Sacrifices then did, and our *Christian* Devotions still do derive their Virtue, and their Value. And 'tis the peculiar Privilege of us *Christians*, that *having receiv'd the Spirit of Adoption, we can cry Abba Father*, with greater Affection, and Assurance. And this our Confidence is more and more confirm'd, by that express Declaration of our blessed Lord, that *whatsoever we ask the Father in his Name he will give it us*. Now this being more than we could be either acquainted with, or assur'd of upon any natural Principle, it was absolutely needful, that we should be taught of the Spirit, *who maketh Intercession for the Saints, according to the Will of God*. But

Rom. viii.
27.

Secondly, It was necessary we should be taught to pray, because we are in a great Measure ignorant of our own Condition, and know not what is best for us. For that which the World calls Happiness, appears
in

without Assistance from above. 73

in so many Shapes, is made up of so many
Several, depends upon the Concur-
rence of so many Circumstances, and E-
vents; and besides, it must be so differently
suited to the different Capacities of Men,
varying still as *they* vary, that 'tis very
hard to define what it is in general. And
I believe, if any particular Man were left
to chuse for himself, he would be puz-
zled what to pitch upon.

FOR as no earthly Good can yield us
perfect Satisfaction: So that, which in its
Degree is really good for one Man, might be
extremely prejudicial to another: And that
State of Life, which besits one well enough,
might be very disagreeable to another. Up-
on the whole Matter, so little are we ac-
quainted with ourselves, and such incom-
petent Judges we are of what is fit for us,
and what is not so; of what we do *pro-*
perly want, and what we are *able* to bear,
that if it were possible for every Man to
be made Master of his own Wishes, it
would be so far from mending the Con-
dition of the World, that it would be the
greatest Curse God could inflict upon Man-
kind.

AND

S E R M.
III.
~v~

SERM.

III.

AND yet, which is strange, though we are thus bewilder'd, as it were in a Mist, we are still groping after an imaginary Happiness, which what it is, or where to find it we know not. And, which is worse, this is it that engrosses all our Thoughts, employs our whole Strength, and is the Sum of our Desires; and in Truth, so far are we besotted by our Lusts, and *blinded by the God of this World*, that we have no Discernment scarce in spiritual Things, no Sense or Feeling of any Wants of that Kind, no Relish for such Joys, as are too refin'd for our gross Imaginations, and sensual Appetites.

AND since the natural Man, especially when sensualiz'd, knows not so much as wherein to place that temporal Happiness, of which he is so fondly enamour'd; and since by *setting his Affections on Things on Earth*, he is become void of all Understanding in Things spiritual, and heavenly; it is plain, that he must be at a Loss what to pray for as he ought, either in one Case or the other; and therefore he has need to be instructed.

AND

without Assistance from above. 75

AND blessed be our Lord, and Saviour SERM.
III.
Jesus Christ, who in condescending to the Disciples Request here in my Text, has taught *us also* to pray, and left us not without a Remedy, both for our natural Ignorance, and spiritual Blindness. For the Form he has given us (take it as such) is so perfect, that it comprehends all that is either necessary, or fit for us to ask; and if we use it as a Model, after which to frame our own Conceptions, its very Order, and Contrivance, is a plain Direction to us, both as to the Matter, and Manner of all our Devotions.

AND we are directed to begin, as becomes us, with the Glory of God, and make that our first Aim, and ultimate End, desiring, that it may be effectually promoted by the Propagation of true Religion in the World, by its real Influence upon our Hearts, and by an entire Obedience to God's holy Will, in the whole Course of our Lives.

AFTER this, we may proceed regularly to ask for such Things, as are needful, *First* for the Support of Life, as Life is the

SERM

III.



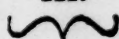
the Foundation of all other Blessings; and then, that we may live happily, we implore God's Mercy in the Pardon of our Sins, without which we must of Necessity be miserable: And for our better Security, we beseech God, that he would not withdraw his Grace from us, lest we be overborn by Temptation, and fall into grievous Sins, and so become a Prey to the evil one.

AND the Conclusion fitly answers the Beginning by a reflex View upon the Glory of God, which we endeavour to set forth, by acknowledging his Dominion, and Power, and consequently our own Dependance, and the just Title which he has to the Homage of our Prayers, and the Tribute of our Praises.

THUS, and thus divinely has our Lord taught us to pray, and happy we, if when thus we pray, we can come with suitable Affections, and Dispositions. For

Thirdly, ALTHOUGH we have a Form so compleat, and a Pattern so exact, yet it is needful, that we should be farther instructed, and assisted too, because we are
unable

without Assistance from above. 77

unable of ourselves to raise our Affections S E R M.
to such a Pitch, as will suit with so holy, III.
and heavenly an Exercise. 

FOR Prayer being an immediate Address to the Throne of God, we ought to approach with all that Awe, and Reverence, which becomes poor Creatures in the Presence of their great Creator, and vile Offenders at the Tribunal of their just Judge. And yet this should not abate of that Love, which we owe to him as an indulgent Father, nor shake our Faith in him as a merciful Redeemer; and the whole Performance ought to be accompany'd, and animated with such a fervent Zeal, as may at once bespeak our humble Sense of our own Frailties and Sins, and our earnest Desire, as well as comfortable Assurance of finding Rest unto our Souls, in the Merits, and Mercies of *Christ*.

Now to bring our Minds into this heavenly Frame, and to put all these devout Affections in Exercise at once, and keep them up in their due Tone, and Temper, is what Flesh, and Blood knows not how to set about without the special Aids of divine Grace. 'Tis the Spirit of Supplication

SERM. tion itself that must first wean us from
 III. the Love of this World, where our Treas-
 ~~~~~ sure, and our Hearts for the most Part are,  
 and sanctify, both our Judgments, and Affections, that we may be enabled to discern, and excited to desire Things, which are more excellent.

'Tis the same Spirit, that must add such a Degree of Fervency to these holy Thoughts, and Desires once enkindled in us, as may enflame, and enforce our Devotions, and preserve them from languishing, and fainting.

AND this is agreeable to what the Apostle says, *Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our Infirmities: For we know not what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself maketh Intercession for us with Groanings which cannot be uttered*; where the Spirit is said to intercede for us, in that it excites, and instructs us to pray, and inspires us with Affections suitable thereunto; and it is said to help our Infirmities, in that it assists our poor, and furthers our weak Endeavours, helping together with them, as the Word *συνωμιλαμενάμεναι* imports, and this, in Respect of natural Impotence, and Deadness  
 of

*without Assistance from above.*

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of Affection, is also necessary to furnish us S E R M.  
unto so good a Work. III.

AND if any Man lists to call this gracious Assistance of the Spirit, the Gift of Prayer, he speaks reverently, and safely, if he means it in the Sense that I have already explained it: But if he aims to be understood of such a wonderful Gift of immediate Infusion, as was conferr'd upon the *Apostles* in the primitive Times, he must bear with me, if I say, that it favours too much, either of Ostentation, or Presumption.

FOR I would appeal to the Conscience of the Man himself, as well as the Sense, and Experience of others, if he pretends to what he knows he has not, or at least cannot prove that he has. Is it not a foolish Ostentation, and a pious (or rather an impious) piece of Fraud, which, as it is too palpable not to be discover'd, so it serves only to expose Religion, and to make it the Sport of the prophane Scoffers of the Age?

AND if he can be so vain, as to persuade himself, and bear the World in Hand, that he is really so gifted, then I must appeal from him to those who think  
more



SERMON. more soberly, whether it be not a ground-  
 III. less Presumption, since there is no Promise  
 of the Continuance of such extraordinary  
 Gifts in the Church; nor any Necessity for  
 them, because the first Reason is ceas'd,  
 and God's ordinary Grace is abundantly  
 sufficient.

So that in the Upshot, this appears to  
 be no other than the Spirit of Error, and  
 Delusion, which is really undermining Re-  
 ligion, at the same Time that it pretends  
 to advance it upon such unwarrantable  
 Grounds, and false Persuasions.

AND having thus far asserted the Ne-  
 cessity of Prayer itself, and our Inability  
 to pray as we ought, unless we be particu-  
 larly instructed, and specially assisted, and  
 having shewn moreover wherein that In-  
 struction does truly consist; I should now  
 pass on to the next Thing in order. But  
 this I shall reserve to the next Opportunity.

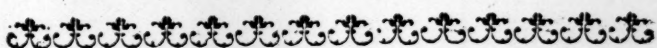
*Now to God the Father, &c.*

SERMON



## S E R M O N IV.

Of the Lawfulness, and Expedi-  
ency of Forms of Prayer.



LUKE xi. 1, 2, &c.

*And it came to pass, that as he was  
praying in a certain Place, when  
he ceased, one of his Disciples said  
unto him, Lord, teach us to pray,  
as John also taught his Disciples.  
And he said unto them, when ye  
pray say, Our Father, &c.*



IN speaking to these Words, I S E R M.  
propos'd, IV.



I. *First,* To shew the Ne-  
cessity of Prayer itself.

VOL. III.

G

II. *Secondly,*

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S E R M. II. *Secondly*, OUR Disability to pray as  
 IV. we ought, without we be instructed, and  
 assisted from above.

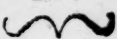
To these two Particulars, I have already spoken. I proceed now

III. *Thirdly*, To attempt to prove the Lawfulness and Expediency of Forms of Prayer in general, and that they also in their Kind are Helps to Devotion. And here I might deduce my Proofs from the earliest of Times, and the Prescription of God himself, who did expressly appoint the very Form of Words, in which the Priests were to bless the People. And we have likewise a Form of Confession prescrib'd upon the Dedication of their first Fruits. And some others as particular are to be met with; and indeed the whole *Jewish* Liturgy seems to have been compos'd in a great Measure out of the Book of *Psalms*, as is evident, both from the Matter of the *Psalms* themselves, which consist chiefly of Prayers and Praises, and the Title of many of them, which are dedicated to the Service of the Temple, and commended to *Asaph* and his Brethren, or the Master of the

Numb. vi.  
23.

Deut.  
xxvi.

the Choir, in general. And, as Dr. *Lightfoot* observes out of the *Talmudists*, their daily, and stated Prayers were digested into a certain Form, and reduc'd to a certain Number.

SERM.  
IV.  


BUT I shall content myself with the single Argument of my Text, which, I think, is too pregnant, and plain to be contested, or eluded: And this Argument is grounded, partly upon the Occasion of the Request made to our Saviour in these Words, *Lord teach us to pray, as John also taught his Disciples*; but principally upon our Lord's own Authority, and particular Direction hereupon.

AND if we reflect upon the Occasion of this Request (as I intimated above) 'tis the probable Opinion of learned Men, that 'twas customary among the Masters in *Israel* to deliver Forms of Prayer of their own to their Scholars, to be us'd by them as Badges of Distinction, whereby they publickly own'd at whose Feet they had been bred up. And some such Form, it should seem, *John* had given to his Disciples, and that (as the abovemention'd Dr. *Lightfoot* conjectures) perhaps a new one,



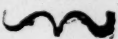
# 84 *The Lawfulness, and Expediency*

SERMON. suited to the new Doctrine of Repentance,  
 IV. and Regeneration, which he taught: And  
 this begot an Emulation in the Disciples of  
*Christ*, and made them earnestly desire,  
 that *he* would also teach them to pray; to  
 which their *pious Request* *he* graciously con-  
*descended*. And for ought therefore has  
 hitherto appear'd, as Forms were always  
 in Use among the *Jews*, so they are allow'd  
 by the Practice of *St. John*, and not dis-  
 countenanc'd by our Saviour himself; and  
 consequently I can't see but they must be  
 lawful.

BUT if we consider what his particular  
 Direction was upon this Occasion, his Au-  
 thority will sufficiently determine us, and  
 leave no farther Room for Doubt, or  
 Cavil.

FOR our blessed Lord in answer to the  
 Request here made to him, immediately  
 dictates a Form to them, and the very  
 same in Substance with that he had before  
 prescrib'd in the Sermon upon the Mount.  
 And he repeats it now again, only with  
*such a Variation* as plainly shews, that it  
 was at first design'd for general Use, both  
 in public and in private: For the Addition of  
 the

the *Doxology*, concluding with *Amen*, as we find it in *St. Matthew*, is adapted to the former; and the Omission of both, as we have it in *St. Luke*, is manifestly suited to the latter, as the Men acquainted with Customs observe.

SERM.  
IV.  


AND however the Disciples might apprehend it at first Hearing, it was certainly intended for a *Form*, and is most expressly deliver'd as such. In *St. Matthew* indeed it is only said, *After this Manner pray ye*, from whence those who are dextrous at Evasion would conclude, that it was design'd for no more than a bare Pattern, after which, to frame, and regulate our own Conceptions in Prayer. But here 'tis directly said, *when ye pray, say, i. e.* not only to this Effect and Purpose, but in these very Words, which I design not barely to be a Rule of Direction to you in your own Compositions, but I commend it as a Form of my own immediate Appointment, to be us'd without Limitation, or Distinction.

AND so, no Doubt, it was then understood by the Apostles; and so it was esteem'd and us'd by the primitive *Christians*, as several of the antientest Fathers

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SER M. testify, particularly St. Cyprian, and Ter-

IV. tullian, who calls it *ordinaria & legitima oratio*, which we may well render the stated, and canonical Prayer; and he says, it was wont to be premis'd before the rest, as being the Foundation of all Prayers.

AND after the first three Centuries, when the miraculous Gifts of the Holy Ghost were now for the most Part ceas'd, public Liturgies began to be compil'd, and form'd after this Model; and the Prayer itself was constantly insert'd, as being the Standard of the whole, and a convenient Supplement to whatsoever might through Ignorance, or Incogitancy, be omitted in Composures merely humane.

AND such ever since has been the Usage of all *Christian* Churches to this very Day; which has been substantially prov'd by the learned Dr. *Falkner*, and the Objections to the contrary, as solidly refuted.

AND now upon the whole Matter, if the Authority, and Example of our Lord, and Saviour; if the Sense, and Practice of the primitive Church, and the constant Usage of all succeeding Churches be sufficient to warrant any Thing to be lawful, Forms  
of

of Prayer are most unquestionably so. SERM.  
IV.

AND is it not a most amazing Thing, after the Experience of sixteen hundred Years and upwards, that there should remain any Controversy as to this Point?

AND yet, strange as it is, this very Age, and Nation has produc'd *some* so over-scrupulous, that they have not only condemn'd the Use of Forms in general, but they have rejected, and refus'd even the Lord's Prayer itself, as being a Form too narrow, and too lean, it seems, for Men of precious Gifts; as having been abus'd to superstitious Purposes; or at best, as not being fitted to all Conditions, nor properly, and safely to be us'd by all sorts of Persons. For these are some of those unaccountable Prejudices, which Men have taken up against it, which I believe, you would hardly have Patience with me, if I should but go about to confute.

“ BLESSED *Jesu!* that thou shouldst *still*  
“ *endure such Contradiction of Sinners!*  
“ that thy Words should be so nicely  
“ scann'd, thy Wisdom so openly call'd in  
“ Question, thy Compassion to our Infirmities



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SERM. "mities so ill requited, and thy Authority

IV. "so boldly contraven'd!

" 'Tis a Provocation sure too great for  
 " any Charity, but that which could move  
 " thee to offer something in Excuse of  
 " thy very Murderers, saying, *Father for-*  
 " *give them, for they know not what they*  
 " *do:* And yet O Lord (if incurable Ob-  
 " stinacy has not made it a Sin unto  
 " Death) suffer us also, in Imitation of thee,  
 " to pray for these thy Blasphemers, and  
 " say, *Father, for thy Son Jesus Christ his*  
 " *Sake, forgive them; for they know not*  
 " *what they say.*"

BUT to proceed, though we hold our  
 selves oblig'd to acquiesce in the Autho-  
 rity of our Lord, and Saviour, and to en-  
 tertain no farther Doubt of the Lawful-  
 ness of Forms; yet, to silence Gainsayers,  
 it may be prov'd moreover from evident  
 Reason, that they are not only lawful, but  
 expedient. And not to refer myself again  
 to his Wisdom, who appointed the Form  
 before us, the Reasons I shall offer are  
 these,

*First*

*First*, THAT Forms of Prayer are free from the manifest Inconveniencies of extemporary Effusions. SERM.  
IV.

*Secondly*, THAT they are not subject to any of their own, or none at least, but what a Remedy is provided for.

*First*, I SAY, that Forms of Prayer are free from the manifest Inconveniencies of extemporary Effusions. Now here I must remind you, that I have already cut off all Pretences to the extraordinary Assistance of the Holy Ghost in these Cases, because there is no Promise to build upon, no Necessity that requires it; and because they who most pretend to it, cannot prove the Truth of this by the Exercise of any other miraculous Gift. It remains therefore, that these extemporary Effusions are purely the Product of humane Endeavours, and that, 'tis to be fear'd, without due Preparation too.

AND such Prayers pour'd forth in this Manner (whether really unpremeditated, or artificially contriv'd, that they may seem so) are manifestly liable to two Inconveniencies, which Forms are free from.

*First*,

SERM.  
IV.

*First*, Distraction of Spirit in the Hearers, occasion'd by the Trouble of attending to Words and Sentences, with which he is unacquainted before-hand.

*Secondly*, THE Hazard in the Speaker of committing Indecencies in the Worship of God, and prophaning his holy Name, and the Scandal that may arise from hence.

THE *First* great Inconvenience of this Way is Distraction of Spirit in the Hearer, occasion'd by the Trouble of attending to Words and Sentences, which he is unacquainted with afore-hand. And this can hardly be avoided, suppose the best you can. For the Man that considers, and makes Conscience of what he is about, will think himself oblig'd to give ear diligently, *First*, to the Words themselves, and then to the Connexion, that he may make Sense of them; and after that, to the Propriety, Decency, and Soundness of them; that so he may affectionately apply them to his own Use in common with the rest. And 'till this be done, he that prayeth speaks into the Air, and indeed in an unknown Tongue, and is going on all the while, when perhaps the Auditory is often

at

at a Stand; and so cannot join with him at all (which defeats the very End of public Worship) or else must join in they know not what, which would be *to offer a Sacrifice, without a Heart*, and burn Incense to the Lord without any Odour, or in plainer Words, to serve God (*who requireth Truth in the inner Parts*) with mere bodily Exercise, and the same blind Devotion, which we deservedly blame the Church of Rome for.

NOR would it be any Remedy to the Distraction, and Indevotion that must needs proceed from hence, even if we should allow the Teacher to be miraculously gifted; for still the same tedious Attention would be in a great Measure requir'd, unless we could suppose the Audience to be illuminated all on the sudden, and every Man there to have his private *Revelation*.

BUT now on the other Hand, where there is a common Prayer consisting of a Form of sound Words, which 'tis free for every one to examine in private, and to *con*, and peruse them, the better to fit themselves for God's Worship in the public Assembly; there, all Things are in  
Readiness



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SER M. Readiness at once, and go on with one un-  
 IV. interrupted Tenour, and the same Solemnity of Devotion is preserved from the Beginning to the End, without any Thing to scatter the Thoughts, or slacken the Affections. There Men *glorify God with one Mind, and with one Mouth; and pray with the Spirit, and with the Understanding* also; that is to say, not only with Warmth and Fervency, but with a judicious Satisfaction, that what they do, is according to the Will of God.

ANOTHER Inconvenience of extemporary Prayer, which Forms are free from, is the Hazard the Speaker runs, of committing Indecencies in the Worship of God, and prophaning his holy Name. For not to approach God with a Reverence suitable to his divine Majesty, or to bespeak his Mercy, and loving Kindness with that Gravity, and Humility which becomes the solemn Duty of Prayer, is in Truth to affront, and dishonour him. And I wish *they* have not too much to answer for upon this Account, who rush into his Presence without any sort of Preparation, either depending upon immediate Infusion, (which as I have observ'd once and again

of Forms of Prayer.

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SERM.  
IV.

is an unpromised Gift) or else trusting to their own Abilities, which is still a dangerous Presumption. For can any Mortal, especially when in God's dreadful Presence, I say, can any Mortal secure himself, that he shall have his Thoughts so entire, his Head so clear, his Invention so ready, and his Tongue so fluent, as never to vent any crude Conception, nor utter an indecent Expression, never to divert into needless Digression, and vain Repetition, nor take Refuge in mystical Cant, and empty Sounds that signify nothing? I don't appeal to Matter of Fact in this Case, for there is Inconvenience enough in the very Hazard. And that wise Caution of the Son of *Syrach* shews the Danger to be great, *before thou prayest, prepare thyself; and be not as one that tempts the Lord.* For to tempt God is to expect any Thing from him without using the ordinary Helps. And of this Fault are they guilty (says \* Bp. *Wilkins*) who depend so much upon immediate Infusion, as to neglect all Premeditation, and previous Study.

Ecclus.  
xviii. 23.

\*

p. 21.

IF

SERM.

IV.

IF any concern'd should think fit to say, that they do not rush upon this Duty, without some Preparation both of Matter and Expression, this I conceive, is in some Measure to give up the Point; for it can pass no longer for extemporary Prayer. But be it as it will, the best Provision that can be made against such Miscarriages, and Indecencies, is by public Liturgies, which are not the Creature of one Man's Brain, but the studied Work of a whole *Presbytery*, wherein every Thing is deliberately weigh'd, and brought to the Test: The Matter is sound and good, the Words apt and chosen; and the whole of a Piece with itself, and modell'd as near as may be, after the first and best Pattern. And here the Minister's Business is to perform divine Service, with that Gravity of Speech, and Reverence of Gesture, as may answer to the Solemnity of the Offices themselves, and enkindle a suitable Devotion in the Auditors. But

*Secondly*, As Forms are free from the manifest Inconveniencies of extemporary Effusions, so they are subject to none of their own, none at least, but what may be more justly

justly objected against those of the other Way. I know it is commonly alledg'd against the Use of Set-forms, that it stints the Spirit, that 'tis a Hindrance to Devotion, and Edification, that it cannot be applicable to all Emergencies, and Occasions. But of how little Weight these Allegations are, will soon appear.

*First*, THEY say it stints the *Spirit*, which ought to be free and unlimited. If it be the Spirit of God, they mean, that we know, does not supersede the Use of *Means* in its ordinary Operations, and such is the Assistance it affords us in Prayer, and what *Means* more proper to excite our *Christian* Graces, than a well compos'd Form consisting of good pious Matter, and fitting, and acceptable Words? And why should not the Spirit of God be suppos'd to have as much to do in such a Composition made by joint Agreement, as in the sudden Effusions of any single Man? If it be the Spirit of the Minister they mean; and good Reason too it should be limited; for even in the Exercise of extraordinary Gifts we read, that *the Spirits* <sup>1 Cor. xiv.</sup> *of the Prophets are subject to the Prophets.* <sup>32.</sup>

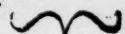
And



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SERM. And much rather ought it so to be in the  
 IV. Use of ordinary Talents, especially since  
 such foul Miscarriages may happen to arise  
 from the indiscreet Freedom of extemporary  
 Performers, as may not only interrupt,  
 and indeed nauseate Devotion, but also  
 give great Scandal to the Hearers. If it  
 be the Spirit of the People that they mean,  
 I don't see how that is cramp'd, and con-  
 fin'd more by a set Form, than by unpre-  
 meditated Prayer, that is perhaps in one  
 Sense void of *all Form*; and yet notwith-  
 standing, be the Matter never so indigest-  
 ed, the Method never so perplex'd, the  
 Expression never so improper, it is still a  
 Form to them to all Intents and Purposes,  
 if they join in it; but whether they may  
 do that or no, they cannot tell 'till they  
 hear it, and even then they have hardly  
 Time to consider it; so that in the Result,  
 I think, there is little gain'd by this Ob-  
 jection.

*Secondly*, THEY say, that a set Form is  
 a Hindrance to true Edification and De-  
 votion! Now, as I take it, then we may  
 be said to be truly edify'd in Prayer, when  
*we pray with the Spirit, and pray with the*



*Understanding also, i. e.* when our Judgment, and Affections go together, when the first is enlightned as much, as the latter are enflamed, which makes the whole *a reasonable Service*, without any of those Fits and Transports, which betray a great deal of Enthusiasm, but *no Zeal that is according to Knowledge*. And then may we be said to be devout, when we pray with that Fear, and Love, and Faith, and Fervency, and Resignation of Soul that God requires: And why not all this, I beseech you, as well with a Form as without? Or rather, why not as well with a stated Form; as an *extemporary Form*? For so we now may call it, since it appears to be no other, *at least to the People*. If not, where does the mighty Advantage lie after all? What in the bare Difference of reciting *memoriter*, and reading out of a Book? That's hardly credible. For I make no Doubt at all, but a Minister may read his Prayers with such a grave, and yet affectionate Pronuntiation, with such an humble, and yet graceful Deportment, and such other outward Signs of inward Reverence, as shall effectually persuade the

SER M. People, that he is himself in Earnest, and,  
 IV. if *they* are in any good Disposition, provoke them to be so too.

AND on the other Hand, I am afraid, that some of the other Way, do pronounce their Prayers in such an affected Tone, and use so much, and such ill-chosen Gesture, that one would think should offend the serious (if for no other Reason yet) because it diverts those that are otherwise. So that if the Question should be put once more, where does the Advantage lie after all? I believe this Objection would be found to turn its Edge upon those that first laid hold on't. And this is more evident still, if we call to Mind that Distraction, and Uncertainty, which (as I have prov'd) the Hearer is always more or less subject to in extemporary Prayers. For that must of Necessity frequently suspend his Judgment, and damp his Affections, and consequently hinder his Edification; especially, if any Thing is said that is unsound, or unsavoury; for that will scandalize him, and raise Scruples in his Mind, and by that Means break off his Devotion. Now the Use of a Form removes these  
 Impe-

Impediments, and therefore is so far from being a Hindrance itself, that it really is a Furtherance to Edification, and sincere Devotion.

*Thirdly*, THEY object, that there can be no Form of Prayer comprehensive enough, to suit all Exigencies, and Occasions. Can there not? And can there be that extemporary Prayer, I would fain know, that shall supply the Defects of Forms in this Particular? If not, why is this made an Objection against the Use of Forms, so far as they will serve? And if any special Occasion should fall in, that is not provided for, in God's Name, let the Minister that is lawfully ordain'd thereunto, exercise his own Talent in that Case, so it be done reverently, and soberly, and to Edification. This I am sure is what our Church does not disallow, and 'tis what the Reason of the Case requires: In the mean Time, if I may have leave to borrow the Instance of our own Litany, I believe I may venture to say, that there is Provision for almost all the incidental Cases, that are fit at least to be mention'd in the public Congregation; and as 'tis very full, and par-



SERMON. ticular, so 'tis withal so pathetic and solemn, so warming and affecting, that sure  
 IV. I think the best Meditations of any one Man that shall make Trial, shall never equal it; and therefore all sudden, and unpremeditated Effusions must needs fall far short of it: From whence also it appears, that this last Objection (like the rest) is so far from doing Service to those that brought it, that it directly makes against them.

IN Conclusion, if Forms of Prayer be free from the manifest Inconveniencies of extemporary Performances, and are liable to none of their own, but what are inseparable from humane Infirmities; if they stand clear of all Objections that are of any Weight, but what may be return'd with double Force on those that make them; if they have really those Advantages over the others; then surely they must not only be allow'd to be barely lawful, but also expedient.

*Now to God the Father, &c.*



## S E R M O N V.

The Advantage of complying with  
a Form prescrib'd, where nothing  
unlawful is contain'd.

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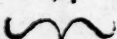
LUKE xi. 1, 2.

*And it came to pass, that as he was  
praying in a certain Place, when  
he ceased, one of his Disciples  
said unto him, Lord, teach us to  
pray, as John also taught his  
Disciples.*

*And he said unto them, When ye  
pray, say, Our Father, &c.*



HEN I enter'd upon these S E R M.  
Words, you may remem- V.  
ber, after I had stated the  
Matter of Fact, as it stands  
here related, and compar'd  
it with the Account we find in the 6<sup>th</sup> of  
H 3 *Matthew,*

SERM. *Matthew*, where it appears our Lord had  
 V.  once before prescrib'd this very Form of Words to his Disciples, and after I had made some occasional Observations arising from the Circumstances of both Places thus compar'd, (which I have since found useful to me) I did propose to myself upon the whole View, these following Heads of Discourse, all of them imply'd, and compriz'd within the several Incidents of the Text.

I. *First*, I propos'd to shew the Necessity of Prayer.

II. *Secondly*, OUR Inability to pray for any Thing as we ought, unless we be instructed, and assisted in it.

III. *Thirdly*, To evince the Lawfulness, and Expediency of Forms of Prayer in general.

IV. *Fourthly*, THE Reasonableness, and Advantage of complying with such as are prescrib'd and receiv'd, provided they contain nothing unlawful in particular.

HITHERTO I have exercis'd your Patience upon the three first Heads, and have

*with a Form, if not unlawful.*

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have been endeavouring to shew, *First*,<sup>S E R M.</sup>  
that Prayer is of absolute Necessity, whe-<sup>V.</sup>  
ther we respect God, or ourselves.

AND with Respect to God, 'tis our bounden Duty and Service, as being a principal Act of divine Adoration, as being pursuant to the Dictates of Nature itself, as falling under direct Precept, both in the *Old Testament* and the *New*; and being moreover inforc'd both by the Doctrine, and Example of the *holy Jesus*, who not only taught, and commanded his Disciples to pray, but himself also pray'd, whilst he was in the Flesh.

WITH Respect to ourselves, 'tis a necessary Means, without which we can neither expect to live comfortably here, nor to be happy hereafter; because, as we all labour under the Sense of our natural Infirmities, and groan under the Guilt of our Sins (which is much the heavier Burden) so we can have no Hopes, or Assurance of God's Protection or Pardon, unless we become humble, and earnest Suitors unto him in Prayer.

AND yet we are of ourselves unable to pray for any Thing as we ought; and

H 4

therefore



SERM. therefore I have shewn in the *second* Place,  
 V. that 'tis absolutely needful we should be  
 taught. *First*, because we are (without  
 Revelation) ignorant of the Will of God  
 in this Particular, and know not how to  
 offer up our Prayers, so as they may be  
 acceptable, and well pleasing to him. *Se-*  
*condly*, because we are ignorant in a great  
 Measure of our own Condition, and know  
 not wherein our Happiness does truly con-  
 sist, nor what is best, and fittest for us  
 to ask. And *Thirdly*, though our gra-  
 cious Lord has left us a Form the most  
 compleat, and a Pattern the most exact  
 that we could desire, yet we have great  
 Need to be farther instructed and assisted  
 too, by his Holy Spirit; because we are  
 still unfurnish'd with Abilities, to raise our  
 Affections to such a Pitch, as will suit with  
 so holy, and heavenly an Exercise.

IN the *third* Place (still following the  
 clue of the Text) I endeavour'd to evince  
 the Lawfulness, and Expediency of Forms  
 of Prayer in general, and that they also  
 in their Kind are Helps to Devotion.

THE Lawfulness I have prov'd from  
 the Authority of our Lord himself, and  
 his

his particular Direction in the Case; for SERM. V.  
he, when his Disciples made it their Request, *Lord teach us to pray*, immediately answer'd, *when ye pray say; i. e.* not only to this Effect, but in these very Words; which I commend to you, not barely as a Rule or Model, but as an express Form of my own Appointment, and by you to be us'd as such. And agreeable has been the Practice both of the primitive Church, and all succeeding Churches to this very Day, as well in the Use of the Lord's Prayer it self, as of standing Liturgies, modell'd after that best of Patterns. AND I might have resolv'd the Expediency of Forms in like Manner, into the divine Wisdom of our blessed Saviour, who, to be sure, would never have prescrib'd such a Method in Prayer, as is not fit and proper, I may say, the fittest, and properest of all others.

AND that the Use of Forms is such, I have prov'd *ex abundanti*, from evident Reasons grounded upon Experience. *First*, because 'tis free from the manifest Inconveniencies of extemporary Effusions; such as are Distraction in the Hearer, arising from  
the

S E R M. the Trouble of attending to Words and  
 V. Sentences, with which he is utterly unacquainted  
 beforehand; and a Hazard in the Speaker of committing great Indecencies in the Worship of God, for want of due Preparation; since immediate Infusion is now an unpromis'd Gift, which we are not to expect, no Necessity so requiring. *Secondly*, because 'tis subject to no Inconveniences of its own, and has indeed all the Advantages, which they vainly arrogate to themselves in the other Way.

IN particular, it does not stint, or confine the Spirit, but is rather a Means (and the Spirit does not work *without* Means in its ordinary Operations) I say, it is rather a Means to stir up our spiritual Graces, and season our Prayers with true Piety. It is no Hindrance to Edification, or Devotion in Prayer, but rather a Furtherance, in that it removes all real Impediments, and serves to enlighten the Judgment, as well as inflame the Affections, and consequently enables us to *pray both with the Spirit, and the Understanding*. And tho' 'tis impossible to comprise all the particular Exigences and Cases, that may happen,

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pen, in any Form merely humane; yet I <sup>SERM.</sup>  
should think Provision may be made (and <sup>V.</sup>  
has been particularly in our *Litany*) for  
almost all the incidental Cases, which are  
either needful, or fit to be mention'd in  
public Assemblies; to which also the Lord's  
Prayer is subjoin'd, as a general Supple-  
ment to all that is wanting in particular.  
And in short, we are always prepar'd to  
perform the solemn Duty of Prayer more  
decently and reverently, and to much bet-  
ter Advantage in all Respects, than it can  
be done in the extemporary Way. And ha-  
ving thus far shewn the Lawfulness, and  
Expediency of Forms of Prayer in gene-  
ral, it remains,

IV. *Fourthly* and *Lastly*, THAT I en-  
deavour to shew the Reasonableness (and  
Advantage) of complying with such Forms  
as are prescrib'd, and receiv'd where we  
live, provided they contain nothing un-  
lawful in particular. And herein also we  
may fairly appeal to the Authority of the  
blessed *Jesus*. For as he has taught us the  
Necessity of Prayer by his own Example;  
and furnish'd us with Abilities to pray,  
both



SERM. both by leaving us a Form to use, and a  
 V. Pattern to follow, and by affording us the  
 special Assistance of the Spirit; and as he  
 has warranted the Lawfulness, and Fitness  
 of Forms in general, by his own wise Pre-  
 scription: So he has particularly directed  
 us to comply with such Forms, as are en-  
 join'd by those who are set over us, and  
 are approv'd by common Use in the Church,  
 and Countrey where we live; I say, he  
 has particularly directed us so to do by  
 his own Practice upon the like Occasion.  
 But this Assertion being built upon an  
 Observation, which I limited in the Be-  
 ginning of this Discourse, I must set that  
 before you again, and leave you to judge  
 of the Conclusion.

'Tis observable then, that our Saviour  
 made it, as it were his Rule to conform  
 himself (so far as well he might) to the  
 laudable, or innocent Customs of the *Jews*,  
 whether in Matters civil or religious. And  
 accordingly in his common Conversation  
 he neglected no Opportunity to insinuate  
 his wholesome Admonitions, and convey  
 his heavenly Doctrine into the Minds of  
 his Hearers, by alluding to By-words, and  
 Proverbs,

*with a Form, if not unlawful.*

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SERM.

V.

Proverbs, and Usages familiarly known among them. And not only so, but he was ready upon all Occasions to join with them in their public Worship, both in the Temple at *Jerusalem*, and other their Synagogues, and Oratories where he came: And to be more particular, as it was customary with the *Jewish* Doctors, to give certain short Forms of Prayer to *their* Disciples, to be superadded to those that were appointed to be publicly, and constantly us'd, as being more special, or more proper to conclude with: So our blessed Saviour, when requested by *his* Disciples, gave *them* also a Form, not to discountenance or set aside the ordinary stated Prayers, but to supply what was of mere humane Composition, and therefore necessarily imperfect, by the Addition of what was divinely inspir'd, and therefore in its Kind absolutely perfect. And this very Form, tho' it was design'd to be of perpetual Use in the *Christian* Church, and to be the standing *Direction* of all our Prayers, yet he thought fit to compose it, *not* in Words of his own, but in some choice Expressions collected out of the *Jewish* Liturgies,

SERM. *gies*, ('tis probable) which in the Power of  
 V. the Spirit, he wisely adapted to his own  
 Purpose.

THIS is what has been judiciously observ'd by the Men most conversant in the Learning of the *Jews*. So far (which is the pertinent Remark of \* *Grotius* here-upon) was the Founder, and Ruler of the Church, from all Affectation of unnecessary Novelties.

AND good Reason sure there is, that *his* Practice should be the Standard of ours in this Particular, unless we be such over-forward Disciples, as to think ourselves wiser than our Master.

FOR if he who came to regulate the Service of the Temple, and to reform those Abuses which had crept into it, through the Connivance, and Countenance of those who made the Word of God of none Effect by their Traditions: If *he*, who came to teach both *Jew* and *Gentile* to worship the true God (*who is a Spirit*) in Spirit, and in Truth: I say, if he, who had Authority to do these Things, did ne-

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\* Vide Not. in 6 Matth.

*with a Form, if not unlawful.*

III

vertheless see good to yield himself conformable to such Usages in the *Jewish* Church, as were in themselves allowable, and not unsuitable to that Way of Worship, which he himself design'd to institute: Nay further, if he did vouchsafe particularly to dignify some select Passages in the Prayers of the *Jews*, so as to make them part of his own most perfect Form, which is the Summary of our *Christian* Devotions: Then surely it must needs appear highly reasonable for us, who are Members of his mystical Body, to pay all Deference to the Judgment, and Practice of the Church *Catholic*, and to yield our ready Compliance to such *Liturgies* and Forms, as are compil'd for public Use in the particular Church whereunto we belong, provided they do not deviate from the primitive Pattern, nor contain any Thing unlawful.

AND by the Way (though I do not intend to enter upon a particular Defence of our own *Liturgy*, which has been so often, and so unanswerably done upon Occasion) yet I cannot but observe, that even our Saviour's Practice is our sufficient

Vindi-



SERM. Vindication against the popular, and ground-  
 less Clamours of those, who will needs lay  
 it to our Charge, that we symbolize too  
 much with the Church of *Rome*, and that  
 our very *common Prayer* is wholly taken  
 out of their *Missals* and *Rituals*.

FOR admitting there were more Truth  
 in this ill-natur'd, but unwary Objection,  
 than there really is; yet, if we retain only  
 what is sound and good, and reject all that  
 is erroneous or corrupt, what is it that  
 that they have to say against it? Did not  
 our *Saviour*, I would fain know, symbo-  
 lize at least thus far with the *Jewish*  
 Church, and was not his most absolute Form  
 of Prayer taken out of their *Liturgies*?  
 And as this was most agreeable to the Wis-  
 dom, and Character of him, *who came not*  
*to destroy the Law, but to fulfil it, i. e.* to  
 fill up all that was defective in it, and to  
 abolish only, what was now become un-  
 necessary, or had been introduc'd without  
 Authority: So it sufficiently answer'd the  
 Design of our Reformers, (like wise Men)  
 to protest against the Errors, and Super-  
 stitions of *Rome*, but not to renounce their  
*Christianity*, rather than hold it in com-  
 mon

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mon with *them*; or to depart from the S E R M.  
Sense and Practice of the *Church Catho-*  
*lic*, because the *Romish Church* was con-  
formable thereunto in the Use of a Li-  
turgy in general, or of some antient Hymns,  
and Prayers in particular. Besides that,  
such an Argument as this is capable of a  
further Improvement than perhaps the  
*good Men*, who use it against us, were well  
aware of. For there are those, who up-  
on the same Reason reject some of the fun-  
damental Articles of the Creed, as *Popish*  
Remnants, and cry down all Mysteries in  
Religion, as smelling strong of *Popery* and  
*Priestcraft*. And to say the Truth, the  
Reason holds good, much as well in one  
Case as the other; that is to say, it is  
stark naught in both. But to return from  
a Digression, that I hope has not led me  
much out of the Way.

As the Practice, and Example of our  
gracious Lord is an undeniable Proof of  
the Reasonableness of complying with such  
laudable, and allowable Forms of Prayer,  
as are prescrib'd, and receiv'd in the Church  
where we live; so the same might be far-  
ther inforc'd, if there were any Need of

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it,

SERM. it, from the Nature of the Church, taken  
 V. as a Society, and from the Relation we  
 bear, and the Submission we owe to our  
 Governours.

BUT besides, that such our Conformity is upon all these Accounts highly reasonable, there are other Reasons, which do evidently prove, that it would be of singular Benefit and Advantage, as well to private *Christians*, as the Church whereof they are Members, not to say, the *Church universal*.

FOR *First*, It is a Spur to Zeal, and a Help to true Devotion.

*Secondly*, It adds to the Virtue, and Efficacy of our Prayers.

*Thirdly*, It is the best Expedient to preserve the Unity of the Faith, and to keep up religious Worship in its Purity, and to confirm Men in both.

*Fourthly*, It maintains, and promotes *Christian* Charity, and so at least keeps up the Unity of Affection.

*First*, I say, 'tis a Spur to our Zeal, and a considerable Help to Devotion.

AND, that not only because it removes the Obstructions, and Remedies those Inconveniences

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conveniences which attend the confus'd SERM.  
Rambles of unpremeditated Prayer; but V.  
because, when our Prayers are offer'd up  
in set and solemn Form, the Gravity, and  
Majesty of the whole Performance is such,  
as will sensibly affect all the Powers of our  
Souls, and help to raise our Affections to  
such a Pitch, and bring our Minds to such  
a Frame, as may best comport with the  
Solemnity of the Duty, in which we are  
employ'd.

AND not only this, but even the Ex-  
ample of every Man is in this Case an In-  
citement to his Neighbour, and adds to his  
Fervour, and Alacrity. And so by this  
Means, 'tis to be hop'd, all become in  
some good Measure dispos'd; but to be  
sure none can be unprepar'd (unless it be  
their own gross Neglect) to present their  
Services to God with one Consent, with-  
out any Thing that may abate of the  
Warmth of their holy Desires, and lead  
their Thoughts astray from their Business.  
Now I confess, that this, as well as the  
rest of the Reasons to be alledg'd in this  
Point, does primarily argue the Usefulness  
of Forms of Prayer in general, but then



SERM. it is to be suppos'd, that we must comply  
 V. with some particular Forms, and consequently those which are in Use where we live, (if there be no other Impediment) for otherwise how shall we reap the Benefit? And this leads me to the second Reason, why a Conformity in the Use of public Liturgies, appointed for the better Performance of divine Service, is of great Advantage; and that is,

*Secondly, BECAUSE it adds to the Virtue, and Efficacy of our Prayers, and makes them more powerful, and prevalent with God. For 'tis the effectual fervent Prayer of the righteous Man, which availeth much; and the more united our Prayers are, still the more fervent, and vehement, and consequently the more available. For if our Saviour to our great Comfort says, If two of you shall agree on Earth touching any Thing they shall ask, it shall be done for them, of my Father which is in Heaven; how much rather shall the unanimous Petitions of a whole Congregation be heard, and granted, who are all together glorifying God with one Mind, and with one Mouth? The Kingdom of Heaven thus assaulted, suffers*

Matth.  
 xviii. 19.

*with a Form, if not unlawful.*

I 17

*fers a kind of holy Violence*; and the violent SERM.  
V.  
cannot fail of *taking it* by such Force, so sweet, so acceptable. This was the Sense, and Experience of the primitive Times; for so the antient \* *Apologist* makes his Boast, “ We come by Troops to the Place of Assembly, that so being banded as it were together, we may be Supplicants enough to besiege God with our Prayers.” So another of the † Antients, “ Many, though never so little, and inconsiderable, when unanimously assembled become great and powerful; for ’tis impossible the Prayers of so many should be despis’d, or neglected.

AND, perhaps ’tis not unworthy our Observation, that the Disciples immediately after our Lord’s Ascension, (together with the few Converts they then had) *continued all with one Accord in Prayer and Supplication*; as we read *Acts* i. 14. That so, though their Numbers were but small, they might rally their whole Force as it were, at once, and make themselves as strong as they could.

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\* Tertull. Apol. l. 39.

† Ambros. de Pœr.

SERM.

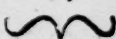
V.  
Acts ii. 1,  
&c.

AND see the wonderful Event! for (as we find in the beginning of the next Chapter) *when the Day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one Accord in one Place. And suddenly there came a Sound from Heaven, as of a rushing mighty Wind, and it filled all the House where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven Tongues, like as of Fire, and it sate upon every one of them: And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other Tongues, as the Spirit gave them Utterance.* A noble Instance this, to prove the extraordinary prevailing Power of unanimous Prayer! and a plain Intimation to us, that the best Way to qualify ourselves for the Reception of such spiritual Gifts and Graces as are meet for us, is by the like Unanimity, and mutual Agreement! And 'tis farther to be observ'd, that even after this plentiful Effusion of the Spirit, *that they continued daily with one Accord, in the Temple*, still conforming to the Rules, and Usages receiv'd among the Jews; as we may gather from the first Verse of the next Chapter, where 'tis said, *that Peter and John went into the Temple*  
at

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at the Hour of Prayer; and thither no  
doubt they, and the rest resorted, because  
they were fully persuaded, that their whole  
Strength, and Security was owing to their  
Constancy, and Consent in Prayer, which  
had been the powerful Means of obtaining  
such miraculous Gifts at the Hand of God.

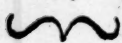
S E R M.  
V.  


*Thirdly,* ANOTHER Reason why a Compliance with such Forms as are appointed, and contriv'd for common Use is so very beneficial, is, that 'tis an excellent Expedient to preserve the Unity of Faith entire, and uncorrupt, and religious Worship in its Purity, and to confirm Men in the Belief of one, and the Practice of the other.

FOR, " No doubt, of God it has pro-  
" ceeded, and by us it must be acknow-  
" ledged, as the Work of his singular Care  
" and Providence, that the Church hath  
" evermore held a prescript Form of com-  
" mon Prayer, although not in all Things  
" every where the same, yet for the most  
" Part retaining still the same Analogy. So  
" that if the Liturgy of all antient Churches  
" throughout the World, be compared a-  
" mongst themselves, it may be easily  
I 4                      perceiv'd,



SERM. " perceiv'd, that they had all one origi-  
 V. " nal \* Mould.



AND I may safely add, that there is no Liturgy antient or modern, in which the Creed has not been inserted; and Confession of Faith has always bore a Part in the public Worship. And there indeed it seems to be as in its proper Time and Place: For when Men are solemnly worshipping God by Prayers, Praises, and Thanksgivings, then may their Judgments be suppos'd to be already in some Measure sanctified and enlightned, and their Affections happily prejudic'd on the Side of Truth; and by Consequence the better dispos'd firmly to believe, and heartily to embrace it. And the frequent Repetition of a Form of sound Words constantly renews this Belief upon their Minds, and gives it the deeper rooting there.

AND in a Church thus believing, and thus worshipping with one Accord, and with one Mind, there is the least Hazard that can be (God's Providence still going

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\* Hook, p. 239.

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along with them) of any Deviation from the true *Faith*, or the right Way of Worship. For the very Form she uses being fix'd and stated, and publish'd to the World, it is a fair, and open Appeal to the Judgment, both of the present, and future Times, concerning her Integrity and Soundness: 'Tis a standing Testimonial of her Conformity with the primitive Church, and a Symbol of her Communion with other true Churches: And 'tis moreover the greatest Confirmation to her own particular Members, that so long as they steadfastly adhere to her Rules, and follow her Prescriptions, so long are they sure to worship the God of their Fathers in Truth, and Purity.

WHEREAS on the contrary, where People think themselves left at large to serve God every one after his own Way, there the sacred Truth is too much expos'd to the wanton Speculations of sick Brains, and Men of unstable Minds are in Danger of being laughed out of their Faith by *Atheists*, or perverted from it by *Heretics*; and the Worship of God is liable to many Depravations and Corruptions, whilst true Religion

SERM. Religion evaporates into mere *Enthusiasm*,  
 V. or empty Appearance, and *Christian Piety*  
 falls into sensible Decay, and wastes to nothing.

I AM loath to borrow a particular Instance from our own sad Experience; and indeed, I design'd this Discourse to be general. But has it not in Fact so happen'd to us? For whilst some Men have forsaken the public Assemblies, and crept into Corners, leading captive such as were willing to follow them, has not this bred a dangerous Division among us? And has not that Division been an In-let to the lewdest Principles, and the most pestilent Heresies? Some of which (as do the *Quakers*) deny the Lord that bought them, and set up a *Christ* within, in Opposition to him; and a Light within, in Opposition to the Scripture: And they worship their own Idol after a Manner every whit as fantastical, as is their Opinion. Others, (as do the *Socinians*) dispute away the Divinity of *Christ*, who is God, blessed for evermore; and no Wonder, if they lay no great Stress upon the Formality of outward Worship, when indeed they take away the Spirit,  
 and

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and Life of it, by lessening the Merit of S E R M.  
*Christ's* Satisfaction, and the Efficacy of his V.  
Intercession, through which alone all our  
Prayers, and Services will, or can be ac-  
cepted. Others again (as the *Muggletonians*)  
have run into some of the grossest  
Absurdities of *Mahometism*, besides other  
monstrous Errors and Frenzies of their own;  
and they (so far as I can hear) have scarce  
the Face of any religious Worship among  
them, but dream of a kind of sensual Pa-  
radise for themselves, and mispend all their  
Zeal in damning others. These, and a  
great many other Heresies there are of  
very ill Example, and no good Conse-  
quence, which have gnaw'd their Way  
through the Bowels of this Church. All  
which might have been in a great Mea-  
sure prevented, if Men could have been  
content to be soberly religious, and to join  
with the establish'd Church in the Pro-  
fession of the Orthodox Faith, and the Use  
of the Forms prescrib'd in public Worship.  
And *Lastly*, a conscientious Conformity  
would be further advantageous, as it tends  
to promote, and maintain *Christian* Cha-  
rity, and to keep up Unity of Affection.

FOR



SERM.

V.

FOR Consent in Prayer is a kind of Spiritual Cement; which when Men's Affections are all employ'd one Way, and kindly conspiring in the same Thing, binds them fast together, and keeps them constantly united: And by this Means, their Unanimity in Devotion becomes a sort of Rule in other Things; it slides insensibly into their Temper, and influences their whole Behaviour one towards another. And this sure, if any Thing can, must needs lay the Foundation of the most cordial Love, and lasting Friendship.

GIVE me Leave once more to use the Words of the learned \* *Hooker* upon a like Occasion. If says he, " The Prophet  
 " *David* did think, that the very Meeting  
 " of Men together, and their accompa-  
 " nying one another to the House of God,  
 " should make the Bond of their Love in-  
 " soluble, and tye them in a League of in-  
 " violable Amity, how much more may  
 " we judge it reasonable to hope, that the  
 " like Effects may grow in *each* of the  
 " People towards other, in them *all* to-

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\* *Hooker*, p. 266.

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“wards their Pastor, and in their Pastor S E R M.  
“towards *every* of *them*, between whom V.  
“there daily, and interchangeably pass in  
“the Hearing of God himself, and in the  
“Presence of his holy Angels, so many  
“heavenly Acclamations, Exultations, Pro-  
“vocations, Petitions, Songs of Comfort,  
“and *Psalms* of Praise, and Thankf-  
“giving?

AND if I might explain upon *him*, I should think that all, and every of these devout Actions in which they are thus jointly engaged, have a natural Tendency, not only to heighten, and enflame their Piety, but also *to provoke unto Love, and mutual good Will*. For what else do they do, when assembled together for this Purpose, but profess themselves to be Servants of one God, who is the Father of all?

To be Disciples of one Lord, who is their common Mediator? To be Members of one Body, which is his Church, and of one another in particular? What do they but declare that their Hopes, Desires, Aims, and Ends are all the same; and that as their main Interest is but one, so they are all Partakers, and Helpers of each other's

SERMON.thers Joy in the Fellowship of one Spirit,  
 V. and all Heirs of the same Glory? And being of this comfortable Persuasion, this heavenly Disposition, what should disunite them, what can possibly hinder, but that they should be like the Multitude of Believers converted by St. *Peter's* Sermon, *of one Heart, and of one Soul?*

Acts iv.  
 32.

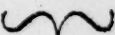
WHEREAS on the contrary, when Men withdraw, and separate themselves, and will not communicate with their Brethren in the stated public Worship; this too commonly alienates their Affections, and even extinguishes their *Christian* Charity, and leaves instead thereof a bitter Zeal, a deadly Hatred, and irreconcilable Aver-  
 sion.

AND here also, (I am sorry it cannot be dissembled) our own Experience furnishes us with the *unchristian* Example. For how have we been estrang'd one from another by this Means? How have our religious Quarrels, (though that one would think should imply a Contradiction) how have they been fomented? To what Heights have they been carried? How have the *Jew* and *Samaritan* been reviv'd in the  
*Christian,*

*with a Form, if not unlawful.*

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*Christian*, and the Protestant? And whatso-  
ever may have occasionally tended to wi-  
den our Differences, 'tis plain their Be-  
ginning was first owing to the unnecessary  
Scruples, and endless Cavils of those Men,  
who have departed from the Communion  
of the Church, and refus'd to subscribe to  
her Wisdom and Authority, in prescribing  
a rational, grave, and solemn Way of wor-  
shipping God.

S E R M.  
V.  


I CALL their Scruples unnecessary, be-  
cause it has (I hope, without begging the  
Question) been unanswerably prov'd, that  
they are so, by Mr. *Hooker* formerly, and  
of later Years by Dr. *Falkner*, and the  
*London Cases*, with great Meekness, and  
*Christian* Condescension. And I call their  
Cavils endless, because though they have  
been so often confuted, yet the Men are  
far, it should seem, from being convinc'd;  
nor have we any great Hopes they will,  
'till God shall please to turn their Hearts.  
And oh! that by the kind Suggestion of  
his blessed Spirit, it might at last enter into  
their Hearts, so to join their Endeavours,  
and Prayers with ours, for the Peace of  
this envied Church, and wish, and help  
towards



SERM towards her Prosperity, if not for *their*  
 V. *Brethren, and Companions Sake*; yet, for  
 the Sake of our common Adversaries, to  
 whom our Divisions have given just Scandal, and great Advantage.

AND thus have I endeavour'd to evince, *First*, the Reasonableness of complying with such Forms of Prayer, and religious Worship, as are receiv'd in the Church where we live, from our Saviour's Example, and Practice upon the like Ocasion: And then I have also shewn how very advantageous such our Compliance would be, upon several Accounts. *First*, as it is a Spur to Zeal, and a Help to Devotion. *Secondly*, as 'tis a Means to make our Prayers more powerful and prevalent. *Thirdly*, as 'tis an Expedient to preserve the true Faith entire and uncorrupt, and to keep up God's Worship in its Purity. *Fourthly*, as it has a Tendency to maintain, and promote *brotherly Love, and Christian Charity*.

AND now, if I should crave your Patience, 'till I make some Application of the whole Discourse foregoing; it shall be but brief, considering the Season.

*First,*

*with a Form, if not unlawful.*

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First then, if Prayer be absolutely ne-<sup>SERM.</sup>cessary (as has been formerly shewn) as <sup>V.</sup>'tis a principal Part of divine Worship, and a Duty not only suggested by the Light of Nature, but expressly commanded in Scripture, and recommended, and taught both by the Doctrine, and Example of the holy *Jesus*; and if we are moreover encourag'd to the Practice of it, both by the many general Promises recorded in holy Writ, and that particular one of our *Saviour's*, *that whatsoever we ask the Father in his Name, he will give it us*: I say, since we have this special Encouragement added to our many Obligations, let us not neglect so important a Duty; a Duty which is itself a Blessing, and is fraught with all the Blessings of Heaven and Earth. For 'tis God's singular Grace, and Favour to admit us into his Presence, and 'tis *our* great Privilege, and Honour that we can approach him, and pour out our Souls before him, and make all our Wants known unto him. But if we turn our Backs upon him, slighting his Favours, and denying him his just Homage; if he call, and we refuse; if he stretch out his Hand, and

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we

SERM. we regard not; *then* will he also hide his  
 V. Face from us in the Time of Need, *then*  
 will he laugh at our Calamity, and mock  
 when our Fear cometh.

*Secondly*, If Prayer be likewise necessary, as 'tis a Means without which we can neither live comfortably here, nor hope to be happy hereafter; then ought we to be constant, and fervent in our Devotions, as we tender the Comforts of this World, or the Joys of another. For if our *Lord Jesus Christ, who knew no Sin*, pray'd, under the Apprehension of his Father's hot Displeasure, 'till he sweat even Drops of Blood: If he, to whom the Angels ministred in an extraordinary Manner, had nevertheless frequently his Recourse to Prayer, and sometimes continued all Night in it; what should poor sinful Dust and Ashes do? We whose Weakness is so much, whose Wants so many, whose Dangers infinite, (and which is the forest Evil of all others) whose Sins are so odious in the Sight of  
 2 Cor. vii. God? For which, if *we sorrow after a godly*  
 11. *Sort, what Carefulness should it work in us; yea what Indignation, yea what Fear, yea what vehement Desire, yea what Zeal, yea what*

*with a Form, if not unlawful.* 131

*what Revenge!* to borrow the Apostle's SERM.  
Words upon another Occasion. And if V.  
we should be but as frequent in Prayer as  
our Commission of Sin, or the Importu-  
nity of our craving Desires is constant, I  
am sure we should hold ourselves oblig'd  
to *pray without ceasing*, if not in the strict-  
est literal Sense, yet to be sure as often as  
possibly we can; nay, as often as we sin  
almost.

*Thirdly,* THOUGH we be of ourselves  
unable to pray for any Things as we ought,  
yet let this not deter, or discourage us from  
addressing ourselves to the Throne of  
Grace; for even those Things, which for  
our Unworthiness we dare not, or for our  
Blindness we cannot ask, God will vouch-  
safe to give us for the Worthiness of his  
Son *Jesus Christ* our Lord. And he also,  
as a Remedy for our natural Ignorance,  
and spiritual Deadness has left us a most  
absolute Form of Prayer. This therefore let  
us use to our own Comfort, and in Obe-  
dience to him who taught us; being per-  
suaded that nothing can be more accepta-  
ble to God, than the Words of his be-  
loved Son, *in whom* he has declar'd him-



S E R M. self to *be well pleased*: And not doubting  
 V. but what we compose of our own after  
 this perfect Pattern, is also according to  
 God's Will. But if we still find in our  
 selves a listless Indisposition, or secret A-  
 version, if we perceive ourselves to be still  
 unable to withdraw our Thoughts, and  
 Affections from the World, and raise, and  
 fix them where they ought to be; yet let  
 not this tempt us to imagine any Impossi-  
 bility in the Thing itself, but let us con-  
 tinue to pray, that we may learn to pray.  
 For Prayer itself is a Gift attainable by Ex-  
 ercise assisted by God's Grace. *And the*  
*Spirit also helpeth our Infirmities*; but 'tis  
 not by sudden Infusion, but by working to-  
 gether with our Endeavours, gradually en-  
 lightening our Minds, cleansing our Hearts,  
 and spiritualizing our Affections, and at  
 last sanctifying us wholly to the Service  
 of God.

*Fourthly*, If Forms of Prayer be lawful  
 and expedient, and to comply with them  
 (where we may) be not only highly reaso-  
 nable, but very advantageous; then let us,  
 who are so persuaded, and enjoy that hap-  
 py Advantage, make the best Improve-  
 ment

*with a Form, if not unlawful.*

133

ment of it by a stedfast Communion with S E R M.  
the Church established, whose Doctrine is V.  
found, and whose Worship is pure, and  
whose excellent Liturgy is so contriv'd as  
to the Matter, the Method, and Expres-  
sion, as nothing can be more for *the Use*  
*of Edifying*, for which there is no Man-  
ner of Proof wanting, but what is experi-  
mental. And let us, who have the Op-  
portunity, endeavour to purchase this blef-  
sed Experience for ourselves, that so our  
Speech may be always with Grace, when  
we speak of these Things to others, and  
that we may be able to convince them by  
the bright Example of an affectionate *Zeal*,  
*but according to Knowledge*, a Fervency of  
Spirit accompany'd with Understanding,  
and a true Devotion free from Ostenta-  
tion. And let us take care to answer their  
Objections too, not those which are brought  
against our Forms, our Way of Worship,  
for they are frivolous, but those more for-  
midable ones, that are brought against our  
Manner of Life and Conversation. For to  
live ill under such excellent Rules, and so  
many Incitements to real Piety and Good-  
ness, is a Reproach that will stick. Let

134 *The Advantage of complying, &c.*

S E R M. US therefore *live as becomes the Gospel of*  
V. *Christ*, and as becomes those who enjoy  
it in its purest Dispensation; and let us  
walk honestly towards those who are with-  
out, that so *they, by our good Works which*  
*they shall behold, may glorify God, and re-*  
*joice not in Iniquity, but rejoice in the*  
*Truth*, when they find us quite other sort  
of Men, than they were willing to repre-  
sent us. And if any, even after this sort  
of Conviction, which is the most sensible  
of all other, will still *separate* from us,  
let them separate; but we will neverthe-  
less remember them in our Prayers; they  
shall not deprive themselves of that Bene-  
fit; nay, we will remember them in those  
very Prayers which they scruple to join in,  
beseeching God, *that it would please him to*  
*bring into the Way of Truth all such as*  
*have erred, and are deceived.*

*Which God of his infinite Mercy grant, &c.*

S E R M O N



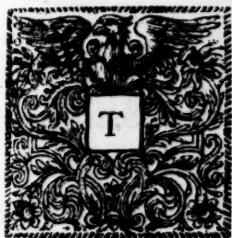
# S E R M O N VI.

Practical Discourses upon the Lord's  
Prayer.



LUKE xi. 2.

*And he said unto them, when ye  
pray say, Our Father which art  
in Heaven, &c.*



THE Words introducing this S E R M.  
VI.  
Prayer, which our blessed  
Saviour here taught his  
Disciples, compar'd with  
those of the *Evangelist* St. Mat. vi. 9.

*Matthew*, do manifestly shew that it was  
design'd both for a *Pattern* and a *Form* to

K 4

them



136 *Our Father which art in Heaven.*

SERM. them and to us. A plain Pattern to be  
 VI. sure it is; for, *after this Manner pray ye*,  
 was our Lord's Direction, according to St.  
*Matthew*: And it is an expresse Form too;  
 for, *when ye pray say*, was his Injunction  
 likewise according to St. *Luke*. And as  
 such, no doubt, it was understood by the  
*Apostles* at first, and as such it was e-  
 steem'd, and us'd in the primitive Times;  
 as such it has been continued in all suc-  
 ceeding Ages; and so, I question not, it  
 will be, wheresoever the Gospel shall be  
 preach'd, to the End of the World.

AND indeed so venerable it was in the  
 Esteem of the Antients, that, in their  
 Contemplations upon it, they frequently  
 take occasion to magnify as well the Good-  
 ness, and Wisdom of its divine Author, as  
 the Fulness and Fitness, and the admira-  
 ble Frame, and Structure of the Prayer  
 itself.

To this Purpose says St. \* *Cyprian*, "He  
 " who made Provision for the Salvation  
 " of his People by other salutary Admo-  
 " nitions, and heavenly Precepts, gave us a

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\* Cypr. p. 264.

“ Form of Prayer: He that made us to SERM.  
“ live, taught us also to pray; and that VI.  
“ out of the same Goodness, and Con-  
“ descension which mov’d him to bestow  
“ all other Things upon us, that so, ad-  
“ dressing the Father in the Words of his  
“ beloved Son, we might be the more ea-  
“ sily, and favourably heard.

AND it may be worthy our Observation, that, *when* our great Law-giver had been prescribing a higher Pitch of Virtue, and greater Degrees of Perfection, than either the moral Law, as misinterpreted by the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, might seem to require, or humane Nature in its State of Degeneracy could well attain to, then he thought it a fit Opportunity to give his Disciples particular Instructions in the Duty of Prayer. And it was wisely so contriv’d, lest the sublime Nature, and apparent Difficulty of the Precepts then deliver’d, should have tempted them lazily to conclude, that they were impracticable and impossible. To prevent which, he taught them how to pray in the most acceptable Manner, and that in a Form of his own Composing; And he encouraged them

138 *Our Father which art in Heaven.*

SERM. them to pray by a kind, and comfortable

VI. Promise of Supplies of Grace, suitable to  
Mat. vii. 8. their Weakness, and their Wants. *For every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.*

AND as the moral Law being explain'd, rectified, and refined by our *Saviour Christ*, does comprehend the Gross of our whole Duty, all that is necessary for us to do: So this brief, but comprehensive Form does eminently contain, all that is needful for us to ask, and is a compleat Directory of all our Devotions to God. And in this Respect *Tertullian* calls it the Epitome of the whole Gospel: And *St. Cyprian* says, " So many, and so great are the Blessings, " and Graces with which it is fraught, " that there is nothing omitted, nothing " appertaining to the heavenly Doctrine " of *Christ*, but what is compendiously included in it.

AND, as some have endeavour'd to make out, there is not a single Petition, but what does evidently refer to some one, or more principal Branches of our *Christian Duty*.

IN

*Our Father which art in Heaven.* 139

IN short, the whole Composition is so SERM.  
admirably fram'd, and so just, and natu- VI.  
ral is the Order of Precedence in every  
Part, that it serves as a plain Direction to  
us, not only what to pray for, but how,  
and in what Manner; and not only so,  
but, if duly attended to, it will insensibly  
beget in us those very Dispositions of Soul,  
which are requisite to sanctify all our re-  
ligious Addresses, and commend them to  
God's Favour, and Acceptance.

FOR to give you a short View of the  
whole, as soon as we have presented our  
selves before the Throne of Grace, and  
call'd upon God from his holy Habitation,  
by the endearing, and yet awful Name of  
*Father*, we begin, as becomes us, with *his*  
*Glory*, and make *that* our first Aim, and  
ultimate End, desiring that it may be ef-  
fectually promoted by the Propagation of  
true *Religion* in the World, by its real In-  
fluence upon our Hearts, and by an entire  
Obedience to his holy Will in the whole  
Course of our Lives.

AFTER this, we proceed modestly to  
ask for such Things as are needful, first  
for the Support of Life (as Life is the  
Founda-



SERM.

VI.

Foundation of all other Blessings) and then that we may live happily, (without which Life were a Burden.) And in order to this we implore God's Mercy in the Pardon of our Sins, without which we must of Necessity be miserable: And for our better Security, we beseech God that he would not withdraw his Grace from us, lest we be over-born by Temptation, and so fall into grievous Sins, and become a Prey to the evil one.

AND the Conclusion fitly answers the Beginning, by a reflex View upon the *Glory* of God, which we endeavour to set forth, by acknowledging his *Dominion and Power*, and consequently our *own Dependance*, and the just Title which *he* has to the *Homage* of our Prayers, and the *Tribute* of our Praises.

THIS is the general Scope of this divine Composition, every Part of which has its peculiar Fitness, and Subserviency in glorifying God, (which is the great End of all our religious Performances) and in sanctifying, and preparing us unto *this*, and every other good Work, which is the acceptable Means of exalting God's Glory in  
the

*Our Father which art in Heaven.* 141

the Happiness of such his Creatures, as he SERM.  
has ordained thereunto. VI.

BUT this will be seen to better Advantage by a distinct Survey of the several Parts, which according to the common Distribution are,

I. *First*, A Preface.

II. *Secondly*, SIX Petitions.

III. *Thirdly*, A Conclusion, or Doxology.

THE Preface is that which we have now before us, compriz'd in these Words;  
*Our Father which art in Heaven.*

AND 'tis a very proper Introduction *this*, that at our first Approach into the divine Presence suggests to our Thoughts the most lovely *Idea* that we can have of God, together with an humble Sense of our near Relation to him.

AND this, as it is a good Foundation, and general Preparation for the better, and more comfortable Discharge of the Duty of Prayer: So it is indeed a particular Direction to us, and an immediate Help to our Infirmities (if duly applied) that will  
be

SERM. be very instrumental in kindling, and stirring up such devout Affections as are the suitable Companions of so solemn a Duty.

AND this will appear plain enough to any Understanding, if we consider

*First*, THE Notion, or Relation under which God is here represented to us. And

*Secondly*, THE Tendency it has both to inspire us with a Confidence towards God, and such other holy Affections, and Dispositions, as may be well-pleasing in his Sight. And

*First*, THE Notion, or Relation under which God is represented to us, is that of a *Father*, with this farther Improvement, that he is our *common* Father, and our *heavenly Father*. For after this Manner are we commanded to pray; *Our Father which art in Heaven.*

THE particular Explication of which will afford us Matter of sound Instruction as we go along, and lead us by the Hand as it were, to what is to follow.

IN the *First* Place therefore it is to be consider'd, that God is a Father to us; and

*Our Father which art in Heaven.*

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VI.

and a Father he may well be esteem'd upon divers Accounts; as he did create, and does preserve us, and as he hath redeemed us also from Destruction, and adopted us for his own Children, and made us Co-heirs with *his only begotten Son Jesus Christ*, with whom hereafter we shall be glorified. And

*First*, God is a Father by Right of Creation. For though Creation does not formally imply Generation, upon which the Relation of a Father is properly founded, yet it eminently implies what is more than equivalent to it, *viz.* a transcendent Act of Almighty Power, that is able to give Being to Things that are not. And in this Respect God is the Father, of whom all Things are, but more particularly of Mankind, who are said to be his *Offspring*, not only because they are the Production of his Hands (as all other Things are) but because they are a noble Piece of Workmanship, *created after his own Image*, and capable in some Measure of imitating his most amiable Perfections, of being *holy*, as *he is holy*, and merciful, as he is merciful, and consequently *perfect*, as *he is perfect*,  
*being*



I 44 *Our Father which art in Heaven.*

S E R M. *being transform'd by the renewing of their*

VI. *Mind after his glorious Pattern.*

*Secondly,* GOD is a Father by Right of Preservation, and this is consequent upon the former. For as 'tis natural for Parents to take care of their Children when young, to give them Education as they grow up, and to provide for their future Subsistence. So does God, and much more, who is the great Preserver of Men, sustaining them continually by the same Power that created them, furnishing them out of his Bounty, with the Necessaries of this Life, and training them up by Variety of Providences (besides other gracious Means, and Helps) to fit them for a better in that heavenly Countrey, *where he hath prepared a City for them.*

Heb. xi.  
16.

As therefore the Act of Creation includes paternal Power, so this of Conservation bespeaks the Tenderneſs, and Bowels of a Father, which makes the Relation more endearing, and the Obligation to filial Duty ſtill the greater, yet eaſier to be born. And God hath moreover in all Reſpects an unqueſtionable Claim to the Authority and Title of a Father, as  
being

being ever able, and ever willing to do the <sup>SERM.</sup>  
Part of a Father to us, in which our Fa- <sup>VI.</sup>  
thers according to the Flesh are very de-  
fective, often for want of Ability, some-  
times for want even of natural Affection.

*Thirdly*, GOD is a Father to us by Right of Redemption. For a Restitution from a State of Misery to a Condition, or Capacity (at least) of Happiness, is no less an Argument of Power, and certainly a greater Instance of Goodness than the bare Donation, or Continuation of Existence. And if the common Blessings of Creation and Preservation, do justly entitle God to the Prerogative of a Father, much more will his inestimable Love, and infinite Compassion in *the Redemption of the World*, by our Lord Jesus Christ, by which we are not only rescued from eternal Death, the just Reward of our Iniquities, but are also born again unto Newness of Life by spiritual Regeneration, and have receiv'd the Adoption of Sons, and the Promise of an eternal Inheritance. And this, even the Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ is the main Foundation of God's paternal Relation to us, and the great Pri-

146 *Our Father which art in Heaven.*

SERM. VI. *privilege of us who are Christians, in which also we have Reason to rejoice, and say with the Apostle, Blessed be the God, and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who (being also in this Respect eminently a Father to us) hath according to his abundant Mercy, begotten us again unto a lively Hope, by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead; to an Inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for us.*

VI.  
1 Pet. i.  
3. 4.

*Secondly, As God bears the Relation of a Father to us, so that Relation is in some Sense universal. He is our Father, i. e. the common Father of us all, of what Profession, or Denomination soever, inasmuch as all are equal Sharers in the common Benefit of Creation, and Preservation. Nay, even the Privilege of Redemption seems to be in its own Nature unlimited and universal; inasmuch as the Value of the Price paid, and the Efficacy of the Satisfaction is a sufficient Ransome for ten thousand Worlds. But yet it must be remembered, that God is in a most peculiar Manner the Father of the faithful, i. e. of those who believe, and obey the Gospel of Christ,*

*Our Father which art in Heaven.* 147

*Christ*, and are by that Means adopted into SERM. VI. his Family, and made Heirs of the Promise. And although, of those many, who are externally called to the Profession of *Christianity*, but few upon Trial are found worthy to be chosen; yet, all who profess themselves *Christians*, are hereby privileg'd to address to God as their *Father*; in Regard that *to as many as believe on the Name of Christ, Power is given to become the Sons of God, and Children of the Resurrection*; but whether they are finally ordained so to be, depends upon their Sincerity, and Perseverance in the Faith. And with this Reserve therefore God is the common Father of all Men, and all *Christians*; and as such, they are all in one Respect or another, hereby authoriz'd to pray to him.

*Thirdly*, God is here farther represented to us as our heavenly Father, or *our Father which is in Heaven*, Heaven being in Scripture called *his dwelling Place*.

1 Kings  
viii. 49.

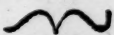
WHICH is not so to be understood, as if God's infinite Presence, *whom the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain*, could be confined to any one Place. But seeing Hea-



SERM. VI. ven is the most conspicuous Part of the visible Creation, seeing it is so vastly expanded, and so gloriously adorn'd with luminous Bodies, whose Beauty, Magnitude, and Motion do naturally attract our Eyes, and excite our Admiration: It is therefore distinguish'd in Scripture as the more especial Place of God's holy Habitation, and the immediate Throne of his immense Majesty, which, though it cannot be excluded from any Place, yet is it more peculiarly present here, displaying its own Glory, and manifesting itself nakedly to the Saints and Angels, who are in the blessed State of Vision and Fruition.

So that when we are taught to address *our Father which is in Heaven*, our Thoughts are raised up at the same Time to conceive of God, as *the lofty one that dwelleth in the high, and holy Place, and inhabiteth Eternity*; which is a Conception that ought always to be entertain'd by the devout Supplicants, when they are approaching the Footstool of the Throne of Grace, the better to preserve an awful Sense of the infinite Distance between the Creator, and his Creatures, between his Sovereignty, and their

their Dependence; his Power, and their Weakness; his Excellency, and their Baseness; his Purity, and their Pollution.

SERM.  
VI.  


AND thus is God represented as a Father to us, our common Father, and our heavenly Father. Proceed we now to consider,

*Secondly*, WHAT Tendency such a Representation of God has to inspire us with Confidence towards God, and such other pious Affections and Dispositions, as are likely to be well pleasing in his Sight. And

*First*, IN the General, certainly nothing could be better contrived, to introduce us into God's awful Presence, and yet give us at the same Time that just Ground of Assurance, which is necessary to recommend our Prayers to his favourable Acceptance. If he had exacted this Homage of us, under the Notion of a lordly Master, or a severe Judge; had we been to apply to him as such, it would have filled us with Terror, and driven us from his Presence in Despair. Whereas we have now all possible Encouragement to seek him with Diligence; for the very Name of Father car-

150 *Our Father which art in Heaven.*

SERMON. ries Affection, and Endearment in it; the  
 VI. very Mention of it moves Compassion be-  
 yond any other Rhetoric.

BUT what may we not hope from *such a Father? who giveth to all Life and Breath, and all Things*, who supplies them out of the Stores of his Bounty, and is always rich in Mercy towards them. *From such a Father*, who looketh from Heaven, and beholdeth all the Sons of Men, and considereth all their Works, *but is no Respector of Persons, accepting in every Nation such as fear him, and work Righteousness.* From *such a Father*, who (as the Apostle says) *spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all; and how shall he not with him, also freely give us all Things? i. e.* all Things which he knows to be necessary, or expedient for us, whether temporal or spiritual, relating to this Life or another.

Rom. viii.  
 32.

OF so great Efficacy is this Notion of a Father to beget in us that Degree of Faith and Assurance, that it is requisite to make our Prayers effectual with God, and such Consolation does it afford us in the Discharge of our Duty.

*Secondly,*

*Our Father which art in Heaven.* 151

Secondly, THIS Relation of God towards S E R M. VI.  
us is apt to possess our Thoughts with that  
ingenuous Regard, that filial Reverence,  
and those chearful Resolutions of Obe-  
dience, with which all our Devotions ought  
to be seasoned.

FOR Father is a Name of Authority, as  
well as Affection, and it deserves our ut-  
most Respect on both Accounts. By its  
Authority it commands our Fear, and by  
its Affection it engages our mutual Love.  
And 'tis this well-temper'd Mixture of  
Fear and Love, that constitutes, and com-  
pleats all filial Duty, which God also looks  
for at the Hands of his Children. For  
*if I be a Father* (says he by the Mouth  
of his holy Prophet) *where is my Honour?* Mat. i. 6.  
If therefore we consider God as a Father,  
when we tender our Petitions to him, we  
shall surely be dispos'd to honour him  
as such.

Thirdly, THE Consideration of the Re-  
spect due to a Father, and such a Father,  
will dispose us to be grateful, and mix our  
Praises, and Thanksgivings with our Pray-  
ers. For it must needs appear highly rea-  
sonable so to do, if we consider either the



152 *Our Father which art in Heaven.*

SERM. Multitude, or the Value of the Blessings we  
 VI. have receiv'd at his Hands. For it was  
 he that first breath'd the Breath of Life  
 into us, and *in whom we still live and move,  
 and have our Being*: It was he that ani-  
 mated this well-form'd Clay, with a ra-  
 tional Soul, the genuine Offspring of the  
 Father of Spirits, which is also endu'd  
 with a Capacity of contemplating, adoring,  
 and imitating its Maker: It was he that  
 made us next in Rank to the Angels, and  
 design'd us hereafter to be equal in Glory  
 to them. It was he that *sent his Son, the  
 express Image of his Person, to take our  
 Nature upon him, and through Death, to  
 destroy the Power of Death, and exalt us  
 to everlasting Life*. It is he (the same)  
 whose watchful Providence attends upon  
 us, to conduct us through a World of  
 Temptation, Vanity and Sin; and to bring  
 us safe to the Haven where we would be;  
 and we are also assisted in our Way thi-  
 ther by the Aids of his special Grace, and  
 refresh'd with the Comforts of his holy  
 Spirit. Surely when we think on these  
 Things, it must needs excite our Grati-  
 tude, and make us break forth into the  
 Praises

*Our Father which art in Heaven.* 153

Praises of our great Benefactor, and say SERM.  
with holy *David*, *Bless the Lord, O my* VI.  
*Soul, and all that is within me, bless his* Pf. ciii. 1, 2.  
*holy Name, bless the Lord, O my Soul, and*  
*forget not all his Benefits.*

*Fourthly*, If we consider God not only as a Father to us, but as the common Father of us all; as it will enlarge our Thoughts in the Contemplation of divine boundless Power, and Goodness, and Mercy; so it will insensibly work us into such a Frame of Spirit, as may best suit with the worthy Conceptions we have of him. And when we offer up our Prayers, we shall prepare ourselves to come, not in the Spirit of Pride, engrossing, or appropriating the divine Favour to ourselves, not in the Spirit of Envy or Malice, grudging that Good to others, which we covet for ourselves, and wishing them that Harm, which we earnestly deprecate in our own Behalf: But we shall endeavour to come with universal Love, and Good-will, mingling Charity with our Devotions, and interesting all Mankind in our Prayers. We shall remember that we are all link'd together by the common Ties of Nature,  
and

S E R M. and Humanity; and that we are still more  
 VI. immediately united by the sacred Bands of  
 Faith and Hope; and that in Virtue of  
 this double Relation, all Men are entitled  
 to a Share in our Affection, and ought to  
 partake in our charitable Intercession. But  
 especially we shall be mindful of our pe-  
 culiar Obligations to the Church of *Christ*,  
 of which we are the fellow Members,  
 and as such are bound to sympathize one  
 with another in all Conditions, and com-  
 municate together upon all Occasions.

AND this we may, and ought to be  
 dispos'd to do, as often as we lay claim to  
 that common Relation we have to God,  
 by saying *our Father*, whether in public,  
 or in private, in the Assemblies of the Faith-  
 ful, or the Solitude of a Wilderness.

*Fifthly* and *Lastly*, If we consider God  
 as our heavenly Father, this will beget in  
 us that Lowliness which becomes us in  
 the Presence of the most highest, and yet  
 at the same Time will inspire us with that  
 Heavenly-mindedness, which will elevate  
 our Thoughts, and fix our Affections on  
 Things above, *where Christ sitteth at the*  
*Right Hand of God.*

FOR

*Our Father which art in Heaven.* 155

FOR if we reflect upon God's terrible S E R. M. VI  
Majesty, which is here partly conceal'd  
from us, under the affectionate Name of  
Father, and yet partly discover'd to us, by  
directing us to his Throne, which is in  
Heaven; we shall not dare irreverently to  
rush into his Presence, nor presume upon  
the Privilege of Sons so far, as to be saucily familiar with him. But we shall approach him with all Humility, and godly Awe, and address to him in Words few and weighty, conformable to this excellent Pattern, and absolute Form, which *Christ* himself has taught us. And this we shall be always careful to do, in Regard that *God is in Heaven, and we on Earth*; and that the Distance is infinite between him and us.

AND yet on the other Hand, if we contemplate the supereminent Glory of God, as he is enthron'd in the midst of all Perfection in Heaven, and the great Honour with which we are dignify'd in being admitted at all Times into his divine Presence; it must needs appear very unsuitable to come unto him with an earthly Mind, and unsanctified Spirit. It becomes  
7 us



156 *Our Father which art in Heaven.*

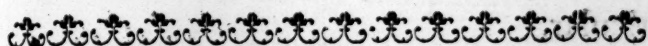
SERM. us well indeed, when we stand before the  
VI. God of Heaven, to be cloathed with Humility; but then that Humility should be all heavenly and pure, and not debas'd, and made vile, by sordid Interests, and secular Aims, and abject Thoughts, and Desires, that are buried in this Earth, and cannot so much as aspire towards Heaven. No; since God is in Heaven, 'tis fit he should be worshipp'd in the most heavenly Manner: And the more lofty our Conceptions are concerning him, the more aspiring our Affections, the more worthy they are of his glorious Name, which is exalted above all Blessing and Praise. And in Heart, and Mind we thus ascend into Heaven, in the devout Exercise of Prayer, we shall at last (when Prayer itself shall cease) be bodily translated thither, and bear a Part with that celestial Choir in everlasting, never ceasing *Hallelujahs. Amen.*

SERMON



# S E R M O N VII.

Hallowed be thy Name.



MATTH. VI. 9.

*After this Manner therefore pray  
ye: Our Father which art in  
Heaven, hallowed be thy Name.*



THIS is a just Observation, and S E R M. VII.  
such as can hardly escape the  
Notice of any Man that be-  
stows his serious Thoughts  
upon this most excellent Form of Prayer,  
which *Christ* has left upon Record, for  
the Use, and Edification of his Church,  
that

SERM. that (besides the Weight, and Worth of  
 VII. the Subject Matter, and the Fullness, and  
 Fitness of the Expressions) the whole Composition is so admirably fram'd, and the Distribution of it into its several Parts so wisely order'd, that it serves at once to direct, and assist us in our Devotions, and at the same Time to beget in us such Affections, and Dispositions of Soul, as may best suit with the Solemnity of the Duty in general, and have some proper Connexion with every single Petition in particular.

THIS is what will appear plain enough to any Understanding, as we proceed in the distinct Examination of the several Parts as they lie in Order; and 'tis what has in some Measure appear'd already in the very Preface.

FOR how could we approach God more becomingly, or bespeak him more acceptably than in the endearing, and yet awful Name of Father, which has an equal Influence upon our Fear and Love, and puts us in Mind of that Obedience, which should be the unconstrain'd Effect of both; and nevertheless animates us with such a  
 Degree

Degree of Confidence, as is consistent with S E R M.  
filial Duty, and yet sufficient to encourage VII.  
us *always to pray, and not to faint?*

AND then, to consider God as *our Father*, i. e. the common Father of us all, how does it enlarge our Thoughts in the Contemplation of God's unlimited Mercy, and loving Kindness; and puts into us also a new, and God-like Spirit of universal Love, and good Will; reminding us with all of our special Obligations to our *heavenly Father*, as being his adopted Sons, and our nearer Alliance to our Brethren, and fellow *Christians* on that Account?

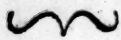
AND *Lastly*, when we pray, *Our Father which art in Heaven*, how lowly, and humble must it needs make us in his Sight, and how fearful of offending, since *God is in Heaven, and we upon Earth?* And yet even this Consideration will both prompt, and help us in Heart, and Mind thither to ascend, drawing us off from the World and worldly Cares, and fixing our Meditations, and Affections on Things above, where *Christ sitteth at the Right Hand of the Father, of his Father, and our Father.*

AND



SERM.

VII.



AND having in this Manner presented ourselves before God, with an Introduction the most effectual that could be thought of to recommend us, and all our Services to his favourable Acceptance, we may well presume to put up such *Petitions* to him, as our great Mediator, and Intercessor has taught us to use in *his* Name.

AND the *First* of *these* in order is this now before us, *hallowed be thy Name.*

AND *this* has justly the Precedence of all the rest. For as the Glory of God is, and ought to be the *last* Aim, and End of all our Actions, (especially such as are religious) so should it be our *first* Care, and worthily deserves the *earliest*, as well as the most earnest Expressions of our Zeal.

AND therefore 'tis observable that these, and the two following Petitions, are but so many devout Aspirations immediately tending to set forth the *Honour of God*, and *make his Praise glorious*, without any *By-respect* to our own *Good*, which ought in all Reason to be postpon'd; I say, without any *By-respect*, which without any Intention of ours will thus be best provided for, to our own *Good*: For if we could

could carry our Eye directly to the End of <sup>S E R M.</sup>  
the Prospect without being diverted, and <sup>VII.</sup>  
amused with the Vanities of this World,  
the *Glory of God*, and the Happiness of  
Mankind do most certainly meet in the  
same Point, and whatsoever does best  
conduce to exalt the former, the same  
does most effectually promote, and will  
finally compleat the latter.

AND this Petition being first placed, as  
it is, and so orderly attended with those  
that follow, may help to rectify our No-  
tions in this Matter, and teach us to va-  
lue Things according to their real Digi-  
nity, and their Conducibleness to that  
which is undoubtedly our supreme good,  
and ultimate End.

BUT not to prevent myself by any far-  
ther Remarks of this Kind at present, I  
shall betake myself to the Method, that I  
think best serves my Purpose; and

I. *First*, GIVE you the Sense, and Ex-  
planation of the Petition itself; and

II. *Secondly*, I SHALL shew what Ten-  
dency it has to beget, and cherish in us  
those holy Dispositions and Affections,

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M

which

SERM. which are suitable to the Nature of the  
 VII. Duty in which we are employ'd, and agreeable to the Purport of this Petition.

I. *First*, I SHALL give you the Sense, and Explanation of the Petition itself. And in order to this it will be proper to consider,

*First*, WHAT we are here to understand by the Name of God: And

*Secondly*, WHAT by *hallowing his Name*, as also how, and in what Respect it may be so *hallowed by us*.

*First*, Now by the Name of God, we are primarily to understand his incomprehensible Majesty, his ever-blessed Nature, and most glorious Attributes; all that essentially belongs to him, and all that we know of him, howsoever manifested to us, whether in his Works, or in his Word.

FOR as we therefore impose Names upon Things that we may the better distinguish them one from another, so the transcendent Perfection of the divine Nature being such, as does eminently distinguish him from, and infinitely exalt him above

all

*Hallowed be thy Name.*

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all other Beings whatsoever, his Name is SERM.  
therefore put for his all-perfect Nature, VII.  
by which he stands thus distinguish'd.

AND as 'tis very hard to pitch upon a Name that shall fully answer to all the essential Properties, even of a created Being, so 'tis utterly impossible with Respect to God; because his superlative Excellence is such, as no Creature is able either to describe, or to conceive: And therefore the holy Scripture is wont to speak of him under several Titles, some of which denote his eternal, and necessary Existence, others his Almighty Power, others his Dominion and Sovereignty; and others the rest of his Attributes; all which being indeed inseparable from his Nature, do constitute him what he is, *viz.* a Being absolutely perfect. And 'tis the compleat Sum of these his infinite Perfections, which we are here to understand by *his Name*; because such would be the proper Name of God so incomparably great, so wonderful and holy, if it were possible to meet with a Word sufficient to express it, and fit to convey it to our Understanding. And in this complex Notion is the Name of God to



SERM. be understood, so often as it occurs in  
 VII. Scripture, without any other Addition to  
 determine it to a more particular Signifi-  
 cation.

BUT *Secondly* (to make use of Mr. *Mede's* judicious Observation) by the Name of God the Lord, we may reasonably understand not only that which intrinsically enters into his Essence, and makes him to be God, but likewise all that bears an immediate Relation to him, and of which *he* is the Lord, and Owner by a peculiar Right and Propriety. Of which Kind is his Worship (which is due to him alone) and the Times and Places set apart for its solemn Performance, together with the Persons ordain'd to minister therein, and the Revenues allotted for their Maintenance. And *these*, and such Things as these are said in Scripture to have his Name called upon them, or to be called by his Name, *i. e.* to be properly, and peculiarly his (as Mr. \* *Mede* has shewn more at large) and by these Things (as will appear) may his Name also be *hal-*

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\* *Mede's* Second Discourse.

*Hallowed be thy Name.*

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*lowed.* For as the super-eminent Dignity S E R M.  
of his Nature is the worthy Object of our VII.  
Adoration, so is his outward Worship, and  
all that is necessary to the due Celebration  
thereof, the proper Testimony of that in-  
ward Esteem, and Veneration we have for  
him, and a public Declaration of it to the  
World. This therefore leads me to the  
second Thing to be consider'd, *i. e.*

*Secondly,* WHAT is meant by *hallowing*  
*his Name*, and how, or in what Respect  
it may be so *hallowed* by us.

AND here, whether we apply the Name  
of God to the Divinity, and Godhead it  
self, or to those Things which are appro-  
priated to his Use and Service, it cannot be  
imagin'd, that to *hallow*, or *sanctify* it  
should be *actually* to make it holy. For  
there is no Need of our conferring any  
Holiness, nor is it in our Power to do it,  
either in one Respect or the other. For  
in the *first* Place, God is in his own Na-  
ture originally, and *essentially* holy, and  
perfectly so in every Degree, so that 'tis  
not possible for him to receive any the least  
Accession by any officious Act of ours.  
All that we have to do is to *bleſs his glo-* Nehem.  
*rious* ix. 5.

SERM. *rious Name which is exalted above all Blessing and Praise*, and to extol, and laud his Greatness, to whom there is none other that may be compar'd. And when we thus give Honour and Glory to him, as being alone worthy to receive it, then do we sanctify, and glorify his Name in the Scripture Sense, that is to say, we esteem him, and treat him, and testify a Regard for him, in some Measure answerable to the Worthiness, and Preeminence of his divine Nature.

AND as for those Things (whatever they be) that are dedicated to holy Uses, they have no intrinsic, but only a *relative Sort* of Sanctity, which (as such) depends upon the Peculiarity of that Relation which they bear to God; and though some humane Act may intervene, yet is it purely owing to the divine Benediction, and Acceptance: And all that is incumbent upon us is only to apply them to those Purposes for which they are set apart, to hold them as sacred in Virtue of that Relation, where-with they are honour'd, and to use them with Marks of Distinction, and respect above other common Things. And this  
pecu-

*Hallowed be thy Name.*

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peculiar Respect thus paid to the Things S E R M.  
that are God's, redounds to the Honour, VII.  
and Praise of the great Proprietor, for  
whose Sake we do it; and consequently  
thereby also is his Name sanctified, and  
glorified.

AND that the sanctifying, and glorifying  
of God's Name, does thus consist, partly  
in that Adoration, and Honour which is  
incommnnicably due to him alone, and  
partly in that reverent Usage, and Treat-  
ment which is proportionably due to all  
Things appertaining to him, is evident  
from numberless Places in holy Writ.  
I shall content myself to mention two or  
three that come Home to my Purpose.  
Such is that in *Lev. x. 3.* where after the  
Sons of *Aaron* had been devour'd by Fire,  
for offering strange Fire before the Lord,  
God is introduc'd as thus speaking, *I will  
be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and  
before all the People will I be glorified,*  
*i.e.* I will be worshipped by those that  
approach my Altar in that Manner, which  
I myself have commanded; otherwise I  
will maintain the Authority of my Laws,  
and magnify my own Power by some such



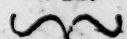
SERM. exemplary Punishment upon the prophane  
 VII. Transgressor, as ye have all seen with your  
 Eyes this Day.

AND that this Worship wherewith God will be sanctify'd is so peculiar to him, that it cannot be communicated to any other is plain from *Is. xlii. 8.* where he solemnly declares, *I am the Lord, that is my Name, and my Glory I will not give to another, neither my Praise to graven Images.* And again, it is said, *For how should my Name be polluted, for I will not give my Glory unto another.* Now if to alienate the Glory of God, be a Pollution of his Name, then certainly to render it where alone 'tis due, is to sanctify his Name as he requires; and that it ought moreover to be sanctified by separating those Things from promiscuous, and common Use, which are consecrated to his Service, is sufficiently clear from that Complaint; *Her Priests have violated my Law, and have prophan'd mine holy Things; they have put no Difference between the Holy and Prophane; they have hid their Eyes from my Sabbaths, and I am prophan'd among them.* For here again, if to put no Difference be a Prophanation, then  
 the

*Is. xlviii.  
 11.*

*Ezekiel  
 xxii. 26.*

the contrary is one Part of that Sanctifi-  
cation which is requir'd at our Hands.

SERM.  
VII.  


AND having thus in general stated the true Notion of *hallowing*, or sanctifying the Name of God, as it betokens either his most excellent Nature, or whatsoever bears a peculiar Relation to him, it may be useful to enquire somewhat more particularly, how, or in what Instances he is to be sanctified in both these Respects. And this may be done,

*First*, By framing to ourselves due Apprehensions of his Excellencies, and Perfections.

*Secondly*, By devoutly worshipping him, and so demeaning ourselves towards him, as becomes the Apprehensions we have of him.

*Thirdly*, By a proportionable Respect to all the Appurtenances of Religion, and every Thing that is any Ways employ'd in his Service. And

*First*, WE must sanctify, and glorify the Name of God, by framing to ourselves due Apprehensions of his Excellencies and Perfections. For this is the real Foundation of that singular Esteem and Veneration, which we profess to have for him:  
And

S E R M.

VII.

And how can we discriminate him from other Beings, *i. e.* how can we sanctify him as we ought, unless we first know wherein he surpasses all besides him? And therefore it will be necessary before all Things, that we learn to conceive worthily of him. Not that it is to be imagin'd, that we should be able to raise our Thoughts to a just, and adequate Conception of his Nature, but yet so far as our Understandings will lead us, we should be ready to go, and own him to be, what in the Gross we may easily conceive, that is a Being infinitely remov'd from all Manner of Imperfection, and eminently endow'd with all possible Perfections; some of which are absolutely incommunicable to any Creature, such as are his Simplicity, and Unity, his Immutability, Omnipotence, and Eternity. And others are communicable in some small Degree, such as are his infinite Knowledge, Goodness, Truth, Justice, Power and Dominion; for in him they are all infinite, though in us they bear little, or no Proportion.

AND yet we are under a Necessity of estimating his unlimited Perfections by our  
own

*Hallowed be thy Name.*

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own scanty Measures. And therefore no SERM.  
Wonder if we be at a Loss to understand, VII.  
and reconcile not only such his superlative  
Excellencies, as are most remote from our  
Ken, but also those which seem to offer  
themselves nearer to the View in our-  
selves, and other the Works of Creation,  
or Providence. However, if we remem-  
ber that as his Nature is incomprehen-  
sible, so *his Ways are past finding*; and if we  
be ready to own, and adore all his Per-  
fections, whether we can fully apprehend  
them or not; and if we lay the Founda-  
tion of our religious Duty in such worthy  
Apprehensions, as are discoverable by the  
Light of Reason and Revelation; so far do  
we also sanctify his Name worthily, and  
render him the Glory that is his Due.  
And this brings me to the *Second* Way of  
sanctifying him, namely

*Secondly*, By devoutly worshipping him,  
and so demeaning ourselves towards him  
in our whole Conversation, as may best  
suit with the worthy Apprehensions we  
have of him.

Now the Worship of God is twofold,  
internal, and external; internal Worship  
consists



SERM. consists in the profoundest Admiration,  
 VII. and Veneration of God's incomparable Majesty, together with such pious Acts, and Habits of the Soul, as do naturally flow from the Consideration of the divine Excellencies, such as are Faith, Hope, Trust, Love, Fear, Resignation and Obedience. For no other Being can be the Object of all these, but who is infinitely wise, and faithful, and just, and good, and powerful, and everlastingly so. And therefore when we exercise these religious Acts and Habits, as judging God to be the eternal, and unchangeable Object of them all; we do hereby sanctify, and glorify his Name, because we discriminate him from, and prefer him before, all other Beings whatsoever. And when the Love of God, and Sense of our Duty influences our whole Conversation, and makes us endeavour to approve ourselves just and charitable, sober and chaste, contented and patient, humble and meek, and every Way harmless and blameless; then also do we sanctify God, inasmuch as the Lustre of a Life so very exemplary, occasions the Beholder to glorify *our heavenly Father*, who alone is  
 the

*Hallowed be thy Name.*

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the Giver of this abundant Grace, and to <sup>SERM.</sup>  
think honourably of that Religion, which <sup>VII.</sup>  
is able to produce such admirable good  
Effects, and does so apparently conduce to  
our present Welfare, and future Hap-  
piness.

As for external Worship, that consists  
in vocal Prayer, Praises and Thanksgiv-  
ings, together with such other religious  
Rites and Ceremonies, as either *Christ* him-  
self has instituted, and made necessary, or  
the Church has thought decent, and fit  
*for the Use of edifying*. And these being  
always perform'd in the humblest Gestures  
of prostrating ourselves, kneeling, lifting  
up the Hand, and Eyes, and the like,  
do testify to others that inward Esteem,  
and Veneration we have for God. And  
the whole Practice implies a direct Ac-  
knowledgment of some of his most glo-  
rious Attributes. For in praying to him  
at all Times, and in all Places, and upon  
all Emergencies, we acknowledge his infi-  
nite Presence, and Knowledge, and Power,  
and Providence; in confessing our Sins, and  
imploping his Pardon, we own his Holi-  
ness, Justice and Dominion over us; and  
yet

SERM.

VII.

yet at the same Time extol his Mercy: In rendering him Thanks, and Praise for all his Benefits, *we declare the loving Kindness of the Lord*, and the Riches of his Goodness, together with our necessary Dependence upon him; and in paying a strict Observance to such religious Rites, as have been instituted by him, and made necessary to Salvation, or appointed by his Church in Matters indifferent, we submit to his Wisdom and Authority. And in all these Things we sanctify his great Name, because we set forth his high Prerogative, and his just Title to all our Services, which no other Inferior, or less perfect Being can lay any Claim to; and herein therefore is he most gloriously distinguish'd from all others.

*Thirdly*, WE are also to sanctify the Name of God by a proportionable Respect to all the Appurtenances of Religion, every Thing that has any Relation to his Service. For the Service of God cannot be performed without the necessary Circumstances of all Action, such as are a determinate Time and Place, with the Instruments, or Agents proper to be employ'd

ploy'd about it. And accordingly there-  
fore it has been the uninterrupted Practice  
of all civiliz'd Nations that make any Pro-  
fession of Religion, to set apart some cer-  
tain Times, and Places for divine Wor-  
ship. And God has been pleas'd to dele-  
gate a Power to the Pastors of his Church,  
to separate a certain Order of Men, whose  
Office it is to minister in holy Things.

SERM.  
VII.  
~

AND as the *Priests* and *Levites* were  
plentifully provided for, under the Law,  
and that by God's own Appointment; so  
it is the Will of God, and has been the  
Care of his Providence, that the *Ministers*  
*of the Gospel should live of the Gospel*; and  
to this End he has from Time to Time,  
stirr'd up the Hearts of religious, and well-  
dispos'd Persons, to devote a certain Por-  
tion of the Fruits of the Earth, and their  
own Substance to this very Use, which  
when once so settled, becomes the pecu-  
liar Property of God, such for ever to re-  
main.

Now in all these Things, *i. e.* in the  
Times, and Places appointed for divine  
Worship, in the Ministers who attend up-  
on



SERM. on it, and the Maintenance for them provided, we may, and ought to sanctify the Name of God. For they being all in some Sort apply'd to his Service, they do derive some Kind of Sanctity from that very Relation which they bear to him, and in Virtue of that Relation they have a just Claim to a suitable Respect from us.

AND such a Degree of Respect they do deserve, as may sufficiently difference them from other common Things, which have not the Honour to be so immediately employ'd in God's Service. The least therefore we can do is to appropriate them wholly to this Use, and to hold them as inviolably sacred upon that Account. For as 'tis the great Preeminence, and Glory of the Deity, to be possess'd of such superlative Perfections, as no created Being is capable of, and as 'tis this that makes him the adorable Object of that Worship, which ought not to be communicated to any other. So 'tis one Branch of his Prerogative, and an Honour due to his incommunicable Name, that no Creature should share with him in the Use of those Things, which

*Hallowed be thy Name.*

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which are once made a Part of his peculiar, by a solemn Dedication to religious Purposes. SERM.  
VII.

AND that separate, and singular Respect which is to be paid to Things sacred, for the Sake of him by whose Name they are called, consists chiefly in these Particulars.

*First*, As to the Times set apart for divine Worship, they are most religiously to be observ'd, and devoutly employ'd in Prayer, and Thanksgiving, in Hymns, and spiritual Songs, in hearing, and reading the Word of God, and such pious Meditations as will naturally spring up in a Heart that is (as it ought to be) sequestred from the World, and worldly Thoughts, and entirely as well as affectionately engag'd in these holy, and heavenly Exercises.

AND that God does expect this, and will accept it as an Honour due unto himself, is evident from the Direction given about it, *Is. lviii. 13, 14*, and the Promise annex'd.

*If thou turn away thy Foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy Pleasure on my holy Day, and call the Sabbath a Delight,*

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N

light,

SERM. *light, the Holy of the Lord, honourable, and*

VI. *shalt honour him, not doing thine own Ways,*  
*nor finding thine own Pleasure, nor speaking*  
*thine own Words: Then shalt thou delight*  
*thyself in the Lord, and I will cause thee*  
*to ride upon the high Places of the Earth,*  
 &c. And as God requir'd the Jews thus  
 strictly to keep the Sabbath, and to san-  
 ctify his Name by so doing, so will he  
 still be honour'd (and Reason good he  
 should) by the religious Observation of the  
 Lord's Day, and such other Holidays, as  
 the Piety, and Devotion of our Fore-  
 fathers have consecrated to the same Pur-  
 pose. And

*Secondly,* As for those Places, upon which  
 God's Name is called, and wherein he is  
 to be worshipped, they are to be esteemed  
 venerable in Regard of that more especial  
 Presence, which God there vouchsafes to  
 those who are gather'd together in his  
 Name. And therefore they ought not to  
 be prophan'd by common Use, or (which  
 amounts much to the same) by any misbe-  
 coming, and irreverent Thoughts and  
 Actions.

FOR certainly, to come into the House of S E R M.  
Prayer with no other Design, but to carry VII.  
on the Trade of Vanity and Sin, to salute, and be saluted, to gaze, and be gaz'd upon, is a most abominable Prophana-  
tion.

BUT if we would sanctify the Name of God as we ought to do in his holy Place, we should approach it with all Humility, and godly Fear, saying and thinking, as did the Patriarch *Jacob* upon a like Occasion, *How dreadful is this Place! this is* Gen. xxviii. 17.  
*none other but the House of God, and this is the Gate of Heaven.* And accordingly we should endeavour to raise our Thoughts, and send our Wishes, and Desires up towards Heaven, and to set our Affections on Things above, and to signify the Intention, and Devotion of our Hearts, by such humble Gestures, and such other Expressions of Zeal and Reverence, as becomes his awful Presence before whom we are.

THIS is what God requir'd of old by an express Precept, *Thou shalt keep my* Levit. xix. 30.  
*Sabbath, and reverence my Sanctuary;* and the Reason of that Precept is perpetual,



SERM. because there are, and must be certain  
 VII. Times, and Places set apart for the Wor-  
 ship of God, as well under the Gospel as  
 the Law.

*Thirdly*, THERE is also more than ordinary Regard due to the Ministers of God, and that both from themselves, and others. *First* from themselves; for they of all Men are oblig'd to reverence themselves, and exemplify that *Pythagorean* Advice by *Christian* Practice, that is, they ought to consider the Character they bear, and act suitably unto it; they should remember that they are the *Ambassadors* of God, and that they ought not to do any Thing that is unworthy of that Honour and Trust: They should remember that they are chosen, and separated for the Work to which they are called, and that therefore they ought not to be conform'd to this *World*, nor to live as other Men do: In one Word, they should take both Heed to themselves, and their *Doctrine*, and make their own Conversation the standing Proof of its Truth, and Power, that so they may sanctify the Name of God in themselves, and turn many to Righteousness.

AND

*Hallowed be thy Name.*

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AND upon this Foundation they have a <sup>SERM.</sup> just Title to be very honourably treated by <sup>VII.</sup> others. For *Men ought so to account of them as the Ministers of Christ, and Stewards of the Mysteries of God*, in the faithful Dispensation of which, they are to be submitted to as acting by divine Commission, and fulfilling that Ministry which they have receiv'd in the Lord. This Deference is due to them for the Sake of their great Master, whom they represent, and in whose Name they entreat the People to be saved, and for their Work's Sake, for which they ought to be very highly esteemed in Love, it being a Work that bespeaks the greatest Care, and Love of their immortal Souls. And this Esteem is best express'd by lending an obedient Ear to their Admonitions and Exhortations, their Reproofs and Censures, by transcribing both their Doctrine and Example into their own Practice, and *lastly* by rewarding their Labours with double Honour, an honourable Maintenance, as well as Respect, that so they may be perfectly at Liberty to attend their Office without the Avocation, or Distraction of worldly Cares.

N 3

AND

S E R M.

VII.

of God himself. For he has wisely ordain'd (as 'tis but Reason and Equity) that

1 Cor. ix.  
11.

*those who sow spiritual Things should reap carnal.* And that Portion of carnal Things which Men do cheerfully allot as a Provision for his Servants, he graciously accepts as a Tribute of Praise, and Gratitude to himself. And that which is once thus appropriated, cannot be alienated afterwards without a Prophanation of that which is holy, and robbing God of that which is most peculiarly his own.

AND if any sacrilegious Person should think it much to be so arraign'd, and should begin to expostulate the Matter, and say, "WHEREIN have we robb'd thee?" God answers them by his *Pro-*

Mal. iii. 8

*phet* to their utter Shame and Confusion, *in Tithes and Offerings.*

AND now, to give you the short Sum of this Discourse, the Name of God, if we take it in the primary Sense, for his incomparable, and incomprehensible Nature, is sanctified, when we glorify him as God, acknowledging his infinite, and incommunicable Perfections, celebrating his

his Praises, and making his Glory the great S E R M.  
Aim, and End of all our Actions. VII.

IF we take it in the secondary Sense for those Things, which, do as it were, bear his Name and Inscription, then it is sanctified by regarding such Things as God's peculiar Property, and using them as the Dignity of that Relation deserves.

AND in order to the better Discharge of our Duty in both these Respects, we are

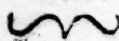
*First*, To frame to ourselves due Apprehensions of the divine Excellencies and Perfections; that so we may have just Grounds to esteem, and revere him, as being first persuaded, that he is worthy to receive all Power, and Honour, and Glory, and Blessing, and that no less a Homage is due to his most excellent Majesty; and which therefore we ought in the next Place constantly to pay, both by worshipping before him with a holy Worship, and by so demeaning ourselves towards him in our whole Conversation, as may best become the worthy Apprehensions we have of him.

FOR that divine, and incommunicable Worship which we give to God, is the



S E R M.

VII.



most significant Expression of that high Esteem, and Veneration we have for him, and an exemplary, and unblameable Life, is a farther Testimony, that we desire to give Glory to God, by endeavouring, in Imitation of him, and Obedience to his Commands, *to be holy as he is holy, and perfect as he is perfect.* And lastly, that our Obedience may be uniform, and God's Name every Way sanctified, we ought to testify a proportionable Respect to all Things appertaining to Religion, or that are any Ways related to, or employ'd in his Service. And this Respect is to be shewn to such Times and Places, as are set apart for the Solemnization of public Worship, by separating them from profane, and common Use, and applying them to the sacred Purposes for which they were design'd: And to the Persons ordain'd to minister in holy Things. If we be of that Order ourselves by taking Heed to ourselves, and to our Ministry, and being *as burning and shining Lights in the World*; and if we be of the Number of their Flock, by rejoycing in their Light, and following their Guidance, by honour-  
ing

*Hallowed be thy Name.*

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SERM.  
VII.

ing them, and providing honourably for them, rendring them that which the Laws of God, and Man have made their just Due, or rather, what God himself has an unalienable Right to, and requires by the Hands of these his Servants. And when we express a conscientious Care, and a becoming Zeal in all these Things, then is God's Name sanctified in the most acceptable Manner. Which that it may, God of his infinite Mercy grant, &c.



SERMON

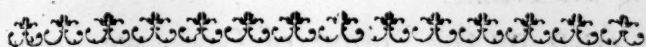
ing them, and providing redemption for  
 them, sending them the Holy Spirit  
 of God, and Man have made their  
 Due Objection, when God himself has  
 manifestly Right to, and requires by  
 kinds of their sin. And when  
 we express a conscientious Care, and a  
 coming Near in all these Things, then is  
 God's Name sanctified in the most accept-  
 able Manner. Which that is many, God  
 his infinite Mercy grant.





## S E R M O N VIII.

Hallowed be thy Name.



MATTH. vi. 9.

*After this Manner therefore pray  
ye: Our Father which art in  
Heaven, hallowed be thy Name.*



THE Method that I propos'd S E R M.  
to myself in treating upon VIII.  
these Words was

I. *First*, To give you  
the Sense, and Explanation of the Petition  
itself. And

II. *Secondly*,



SERM.

VIII.

II. *Secondly*, To shew what Tendency it has to beget, and cherish such holy Affections and Dispositions as are suitable to the Nature of the Duty, and agreeable to the Purport of this Petition.

IN order to gather the full, and true Meaning of the Petition, I considered

I. *First*, WHAT is to be understood by the Name of God; and what by *hallowing his Name*.

AND by the Name of God, we are to understand,

*First*, HIS ever blessed Nature, and most glorious Attributes, by which he is infinitely distinguish'd above all other Beings; or

*Secondly*, ANY Thing upon which his Name is called, and in which he has a peculiar Right and Property.

HIS Name is sanctified in the *first* Sense, when we acknowledge, admire, and adore his infinite Nature, and bless his glorious Name, that is exalted above all Blessing, and Praise.

IT

*Hallowed be thy Name.*

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IT is sanctified in the latter Sense, when S E R M.  
we esteem, and treat all Things that pe- VIII.  
culiarly relate to him, answerably to the  
Dignity of that Relation. And having  
gone thus far, I shall proceed

II. *Secondly*, To shew what Tendency it has, (if well weigh'd and consider'd) to beget, and cherish in us such holy Affections, and Dispositions as are suitable to the Nature of the Duty in which we are employ'd.

AND the good Affections which the Consideration of this Petition now before us, is most apt to produce, and cultivate in our Hearts, are

*First*, A profound Reverence.

*Secondly*, Fervency of Spirit.

*Thirdly*, Heavenly-mindedness.

*First*, A profound Reverence. For if we reflect (as we must do when we pretend to sanctify the Name of God) I say, if we reflect upon his peerless Majesty, and absolute Perfection, the Wonderfulness of his Works, the Beauties of his Providence, the Harmony, and Wisdom of all his Dispensations, and the mighty  
Power

SERM. Power that gave Being to all Things,  
 VIII. which for his Pleasure are, and were  
 created; it must needs strike us with Ad-  
 miration, and fill our Thoughts with Awe  
 and Reverence: Especially, if we consider  
 (as we cannot well avoid it, when we ad-  
 dress unto him in Prayer) that we are in  
 the more immediate Presence of the dread  
 Majesty of Heaven, and Earth, that he is  
 solemnly giving Audience to us, accepting  
 our Homage, and (if we be in any Degree  
 found worthy) ready to admit us into his  
 Grace and Favour. For if an earthly  
 Prince should allow us the Privilege to ap-  
 proach his Presence, and lay our Petitions  
 before him upon all Occasions, no Doubt  
 we should endeavour to recommend our  
 selves, and the Suit we have to make, by  
 the most submissive, and dutiful Carriage,  
 and all the unfeigned Tokens of an hum-  
 ble, and a grateful Heart. And how  
 much rather should we take care to possess  
 our Minds with a holy Dread, and to be  
 very reverent in our whole Deportment,  
 when we come before the King of Kings,  
 who is the holy one, and there is none be-  
 sides him?

*Secondly,*

*Secondly*, If we carry the Sense of this S E R M. VIII.  
Petition along with us in our Minds, it will stir up in us that Fervency of Spirit, which is necessary to add Wings, and Flame, and Force to all our Devotions. For if we be thoroughly affected (as becomes us) with the awful Apprehension of God's adorable Perfections; and if we be passionately desirous (as by the Tenour of this Petition we should be) that his Name should be in the Esteem of all People, as it is in its own Nature, great, wonderful and holy: And, if we long to have it truly sanctified in ourselves, and others, and all Mankind, by the purest, and most refined Worship, and an unspotted Conversation. I say, if these, and such as these be our serious Thoughts, and earnest Wishes, 'tis impossible we should be lukewarm, and indifferent in offering up this, or any other of our Requests unto God.

For all the Attributes of God (even *whilst we view them through a Glass darkly*) are very amiable, and beautiful, and all his Manifestations of himself so full of Grace and Truth, that they must needs (whilst we seriously contemplate them) ra-

vish



SERM. viii. wish us with Love; and that Love enkindles Desire, and that Desire enflames our Zeal, and that Zeal invigorates our Devotion, and makes it more fervent, and consequently more effectual, and available with God. And 'tis but requisite, that the Ardour of our Affection should then exert itself most, when the Subject of our Prayer is the Promotion of God's Glory.

For, if we be but faint and cold, when that is the Thing desir'd, and then only importunate when we ask for the Necessaries we want, it is not to be expected, that such our grating Importunities should be answered, which proceed only from Self-love, and are utterly void of all godly Zeal.

*Thirdly* and *Lastly*, this Petition (if rightly consider'd) will beget in us that Purity of Heart, that Elevation of Soul, and Heavenly-mindedness, which is necessary to make our Prayer a holy Oblation, and acceptable in the Sight of God. For since God's Name (as the Petition suggests) is incommunicable, and since upon that Account he is worthy of all Adoration and Honour, in which no Creature ought

ought to be his Rival; since he is glorious in Holiness, *and of purer Eyes than to behold* a Sinner in his Filthiness; whosoever presumes to draw nigh unto him, must needs think himself oblig'd to *purify his Heart, even as he is pure*, to whom he pretends to lift it up, and to be no longer double-minded, that is no longer divided in his Affections betwixt God, and the World; for to God alone they are entirely due, and upon him to be sure they ought to be intensely fix'd in the solemn Act of Devotion. And if any one in pouring out his Soul before God, suffers his carnal Desires, and wicked Imaginations to mingle themselves with the very Prayers that he is sending up to Heaven, that Man is guilty of a double Prophanation; For *First* he gives a Share of his Affections to the World, and to the Flesh, which ought to rest, and centre in God alone, which is a Sort of Idolatry: And then he makes an Offering to God of a Thing that is unholy and unclean, a double Heart, which is certainly an Abomination in his Sight.

BUT the Belief, and Contemplation of God's infinite Holiness and Purity,

SERM. (which is suggested to us in this Petition)  
 VIII. will both teach, and enable us to *cleanse*  
 ourselves from all *Filthiness of Flesh and*  
*Spirit*, and to take off our Thoughts and  
 Affections from worldly Objects, of which  
 we are too apt to be fondly enamour'd;  
 and direct them up towards that holy  
 Place, where God dwells in Majesty on  
 high, and from whence he will look down,  
 and hear, and answer our Prayers when  
 thus qualified.

AND thus does the Consideration of this  
 Petition tend to beget, and cherish in us  
 those holy Dispositions, which are neces-  
 sary to recommend us, and our Prayers to  
 God, namely a profound Reverence, Fer-  
 vency of Spirit, and Purity of Heart, and  
 heavenly Mindedness.

I SHALL only add a few seasonable Re-  
 flections upon what has been said, and so  
 conclude. And

*First*, If it be the Glory of God to be  
 superlative in all Perfections, and his just  
 Prerogative to be worshipp'd with a Wor-  
 ship which is therefore appropriated to  
 him, because no Creature is worthy of it:  
 And if his Name ought thus to be san-  
 ctified,

*Hallowed be thy Name.*

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etified, then we may judge from hence, SERM. VIII.  
how abominable those Practices are, which  
the Church of *Rome* openly allows, I mean,  
Image worship, and the Invocation of  
Saints.

FOR is it not a most intolerable Affront  
to the Majesty of that God, who is infinite in  
Wisdom, and Power, and Goodness, that  
*Men who live, and move, and have their  
Being in him, for Health should call upon* Wisd. xiii.  
*that which is weak, for Life pray to that* 18.  
*which is dead, for Aid humbly beseech that*  
*which has no Means to help, and for a good*  
*Journey ask of that, which cannot set a Foot*  
*forward?*

'Tis a Pollution this, that no subtle Di-  
stinction can purge them from: For 'tis in  
vain to say, that it terminates at last in the  
Honour of God, and that 'tis so intended,  
whereas God has solemnly declared (with-  
out any Restriction or Limitation) *I am* 1c. xlii. 8.  
*the Lord, and that is my Name, and I will*  
*not give my Praise to graven Images.*  
*Nor will he give his Glory to any other;*  
and therefore 'tis an unwarrantable Thing  
to invoke any departed Saint, whether it be  
immediately to help them, or to intercede



S E R M. to God for them. For to attribute infinite

VIII. Knowledge or Power, to any the perfectest of Creatures, is to equal them with God, which is a sacrilegious Presumption; and to pray unto them, without any Assurance that they can either hear, or help, is an Alienation of the Honour due to God's holy Name, as well as a Derogation to the Merit, and Mediation of *Jesus Christ*.

*Secondly*, If the Name of God is sanctified by the Acknowledgment, and Celebration of God's Excellencies and Perfections, then to deny, or call in Question any of them, is Prophaneness, and Blasphemy. And I am afraid, we of the re-form'd Religion (as we call ourselves) are but too guilty in this Particular. For not to insist upon the Consequences of some Opinions that are maintain'd by some Parties among us, there is an insolent Practice now grown very fashionable, that cannot be acquitted of the Accusation: I mean, that shameless Liberty which is almost every Day taken, and that by Men of all Ranks and Degrees, to question the Authority, and Truth of divine Revelation.

For

For he is look'd upon as a Man of no Im-<sup>SERM.</sup>  
 provements, and hardly furnish'd for com-<sup>VIII.</sup>  
 mon Conversation, who is not ready at all  
 Turns with his unmannerly Queries. How  
 do you prove, and fix the Canon of the  
 Scripture? How do you maintain it to be  
 divinely inspir'd, in whole, or in Part?  
 As to the Words or the Sense? How do  
 you reconcile such, and such like Diffi-  
 culties, which I call Contradictions? How  
 do you account for such, and such Myste-  
 ries, which I call Nonsense? This is some  
 of the Libertines daily Communication,  
 and if they meet to catechize upon these  
 Articles, then right, or wrong they triumph  
 most immoderately. But in plain *English*  
 this is neither more nor less, than to call  
 God's Veracity, Wisdom and Goodness to  
 the Test, and to make it Matter of Dis-  
 pute, whether *Moses* and the *Prophets*, and  
 the *Apostles* were (as they pretend to be)  
 Men sent from God, or a Pack of wicked  
 Impostors. And 'tis such a crying Provo-  
 cation this, that sure *God will* at last have  
 Pity for his Name, as the Prophet *Ezekiel* <sup>Ezek.</sup>  
 speaks, and sanctify it before their Eyes, <sup>xxxvi. 21.</sup>

SERM. *that they may know, and be convinc'd;*  
 VIII. *that God is true, and every Man a Liar.*

*Thirdly,* If it be an Honour redounding to God's holy Name, that his Worship should be devoutly perform'd, and all Things appertaining to Religion respected, and us'd accordingly; then doubtless, that wilful Neglect of God's Worship, and the mispending the Time allotted for it, in Idleness, Vanity and Sin, which is too notorious amongst many, who are never so much as seen at Church, and that Irreverence and Indevotion which are too often seen in our solemn Assemblies, and do disfigure, and deface the very Beauty of Holiness, that horrid Abuse of an Oath by vain Swearing, which, as being a religious Act, ought to be exempt from common Use; I say, doubtless all these Things are grievous Prophanations, so great, and grievous indeed, that it may well seem a Wonder, that any who retain the least Sense of Religion should be guilty of them. For it is not to be accounted for upon any tolerable Reason, why the serious Believer should not be a constant Worshipper; for the

the Man who is firmly persuaded, that SERM.  
VIII.  
there is a God, a Being in Perfection infinite, absolute, independent, and upon whom all Things else depend; he that is firmly persuaded of this, must in Consequence also believe, that he, as one of his Creatures, and Dependants, is bound to agnize the Excellencies, and Perfections of the supreme Being, and to make this Acknowledgment public by joining with the Congregation of the Faithful, in offering up the humble Tribute of their Prayers, Praises, and Thanksgivings, according to divine Appointment.

THIS is a Consequence that no Body can deny, or easily oversee. And therefore that Person who estranges himself from the Communion of Saints, and totally absents himself from the Worship of God, if he is not a downright Unbeliever, if he is not one of those *Fools who hath ventured to say in his Heart there is no God*, he is however in the Number of those careless, those desperate ones, whose Actions proclaim, that he *lives without God in the World*, without the least



SERM.

VIII.

Commerce with him, without so much as the *Form of Godliness*, just as if he had nothing to hope, or fear from the Maker, and Judge of all Men, either in this Life, or that which is to come: And how they shall be able to stand before God's high Tribunal, who seldom, or never appear'd in his Sanctuary, never approach'd his Altar, is a terrible Consideration. And it is a Consideration in which they are no less, if not more concerned, who do sometimes, though rarely come into the House of God, but without looking at all to their Feet, without any suitable Disposition of Mind, without any Regard to the Business of the Place, without any Reverential Awe of the Presence in which they stand: They come possibly to fill up the Vacuity of an idle Hour, not otherwise preingag'd, or to serve some secular Convenience, or else perhaps to exercise their notable Talent at cavilling and scoffing, but to be sure to give Disturbance, and Scandal to the Congregation, by the Indecency of their Behaviour; nay, it has been known, that the Table of the Lord (I blush to speak it where 'tis so well known) hath been rudely broke

in

in upon without the least Appearance of S E R M.  
any Preparation, or so much as any Fore- VIII.  
thought, but to be sure without bearing  
any Part in the previous Confession of  
Sins, and Deprecation of God's Wrath,  
without receiving the Benefit, or the Com-  
fort of sacerdotal Absolution, without say-  
ing *Amen* to the solemn Prayer, wherein  
the divine Benediction is implored upon  
the Elements of Bread and Wine, to con-  
secrate them to a sacramental Use, and  
give them a saving Efficacy: It has been  
known, I say, (though I hope the Instance  
is almost singular in the Kind) that the  
Table of the Lord has been broke in upon  
without putting any Difference between  
the Holy and Prophane, with as little Ce-  
remony as Men step into an *Ordinary*,  
where the Manner of some may be, (but  
those not the best manner'd) to lay hold  
on the next Morfel that offers, with-  
out craving a Blessing, hastily to devour it,  
and so away again about their Business.

Now it may well be thought that they  
who happen upon some rare Occasions to  
be bodily present in the House of God,  
but with an entire Absence of Mind, or  
in

SERM. in a Manner so very unbecoming, and so  
 VIII. shamefully irreverent, are guilty even of  
 a greater Prophanation, than those who totally absent themselves. The one indeed neglects God's public Worship, and therefore may justly be suspected secretly to despise it, but the other openly affronts it: The one breaks off all Acquaintance, all Communication with God, and those that frequent his Sanctuary, but the other boldly rushes into his Presence, as it were on Purpose to bid him Defiance, and carries that Defiance, it may be, up to the very Altar, and sets at nought his Saviour, even bleeding upon the Cross, as represented in the blessed Memorial of that his bitter Death and Passion.

GIVE me leave but to add one Thing more, which I take to be a grievous Prophanation, and that is the Derision, and Contempt, with which the Ministers of God are generally receiv'd. For it implies a direct Affront to our great Lord, and Master, that those who are peculiarly devoted to his Service, should therefore become despicable in the Eyes of Men, and lose not only the Privilege of their Birth-right,

*Hallowed be thy Name.*

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SERM.  
VIII.

right, but even the Right to common Civility. And yet so it is now adays, that the *Ministers of Christ*, and in a *Christian* Countrey, are to expect much the same Treatment, that the Apostles complain of among the *Heathens*: For in the Opinion of many, particularly those Libertines of which I was lately speaking, *we are as the Filth of the World, and the Offscouring of all Things unto this Day*. And now I shall conclude with this short Reflection, *viz.* If it be incumbent upon us all to sanctify the Name of God, by worthy Apprehensions of his divine Excellencies, and by a suitable Demeanour towards him, not only in the solemn Acts of Religion, and the Things thereunto pertaining, but in the whole Tenour of our Lives and Conversations; then how have we (vile, and wicked as we are) vilified, provoked, and defied the most high, and holy One? For certainly that manifest Decay of Virtue, and Goodness, that vast Inundation of Vice and Debauchery, that general Corruption both in Morals and Principles, that avow'd Indifference towards all Religions, and that profane Contempt of the very Best.



SERM. Best. All these, I say, (which are the prevailing Practices of the present Age) are Provocations so daring, and insolent in the Sight of God, and so dishonourable to his holy Name, that they may well be look'd upon as the sad Prognostics of Vengeance, the Forerunners of sudden Destruction. The Spirit of God will not always strive with such refractory Sons of Disobedience, but will be constrain'd even for his own Sake to pour out the Fury of his Anger upon us, and *devour us by the Fire of his Jealousy.*

To prevent our final Ruine therefore, let all of us from the Highest to the Lowest, let us make haste, and turn unto the Lord, and put away all these Abominations out of his Sight, and let us sanctify his Name as we ought, by an unconstrain'd Obedience to his blessed Will, lest he should magnify, and sanctify himself before all People, by some just, and exemplary Punishment upon us, and so demonstrate the Justice, and Holiness of his Nature, by the terrible Effects of his Power and Vengeance. Which God avert, &c.

*Now to God the Father, &c.*

SERMON



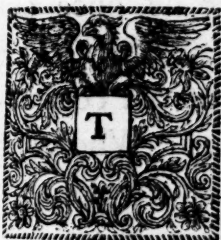
# S E R M O N IX.

Thy Kingdom come.

\*\*\*\*\*

MATTH. vi. 10.

*Thy Kingdom come. Thy Will be  
done in Earth as it is in Heaven.*



THE *First* Petition which S E R M.  
our blessed Saviour puts IX.  
into the Mouth of every  
devout Supplicant is, that  
God's Name may be *bal-*  
*lowed, i. e.* his most glorious Nature and  
Perfections, and all Things appertaining  
to him, by a peculiar Relation and Pro-  
priety, may receive of us, and of all Men  
that

SERM. that Adoration, Praise, Honour, Reverence,  
 IX. and religious Observance, which is proportionably due unto them. For thus it is that God's Name is truly sanctified, as I have more particularly explain'd in two several Discourses upon that Subject.

AND the Connexion of that *first* Petition with the two next following, is so just and natural, that they seem indeed to make up but one unanimous Vote for the more illustrious Manifestation of God's Glory.

FOR what can make more for the Advancement of God's Glory, than to have his righteous Kingdom establish'd over all the Earth, and extended to its utmost Bounds? And how can this be effected, but by an entire Obedience, and chearful Submission to his blessed Will, which happy State of Things, could it be once obtain'd, would make this Earth of ours a heavenly Place, and fit us for the consummate Happiness of Heaven. Whosoever therefore is truly zealous for the Honour of God, and to that End affectionately desires that his Name may be worthily sanctified, must in Pursuance of this his first Request join in what follows, and pray  
 with

with the same Intention and Affection, SERM.  
*Thy Kingdom come: Thy Will be done in* IX.

*Earth as it is in Heaven*; inasmuch as all these Petitions do in their last Result conspire, as it were, to make God's Praise glorious, and shew it forth in its full Lustre.

IN treating upon these Words, I shall proceed in the same Method that I began with, and that is,

I. *First*, To give you the true Sense, and meaning of the Petitions, as they lie in order. And

*Secondly*, To shew you how apt, and fit they are, to beget, and cherish such holy Affections, and Dispositions of Soul, as are the suitable Companions of this Duty of Prayer.

I. And *First*, I SHALL give you the true Sense, and Meaning of this Petition, *Thy Kingdom come*. And for the clearer Understanding of this, it will be proper to enquire,

*First*, WHAT this Kingdom is. And

*Secondly*,



SERM.

IX.

*Secondly, WHAT the coming of it may import.*

Now the *Kingdom* of God falls under various Acceptations in holy Writ, but I think they are reducible to these three, *viz.*

THE Kingdom of Providence, of Grace, and of Glory.

THE Kingdom of Providence, consists in the Exercise of that Sovereign Power and Dominion, which God has over the whole World, in Respect of which it is Ps. x. 16. said, that the *Lord is King for ever and ever.*

THIS providential Government I had occasion lately to discourse of pretty largely. But I shall wave it at present, partly for that Reason, but chiefly because it does not fall so directly under Consideration here, although in the comprehensive Sense of the Words it may very well be included.

THE Kingdom of Grace is either external or internal.

By the external *Kingdom* of Grace is meant God's Government of his Church, especially under the Dispensation of the *Messiah*, whose Mission into the World

was an Act of extraordinary Grace, and S E R M.  
 Royal Favour: And it is in *him*, (as being IX.  
*the chief corner Stone*) that *the whole*  
*Building fitly fram'd together*, grows into  
*an holy Temple in the Lord*, in the midst  
 of which the Faith of *Christ* is profess'd,  
 his Gospel is preach'd, his Sacraments ad-  
 ministr'd, and nothing is wanting that  
 may be any Ways necessary for the edify-  
 ing of *the Body of Christ*, and the perfecting Ephes. iv.  
 12.  
*the Saints*. And in this Sense the Kingdom  
 of God, and *the Kingdom of Heaven*, which  
 so frequently occur in the *New Testament*,  
 is often to be understood.

AND as the Church is founded upon a  
*sure Word of Promise*, which is its suffi-  
 cient Preservative against all the Assaults  
 of Men and Devils: So *Christ* has more-  
 over promised to be ever-present with it  
 by his gracious Assistance and Influence,  
*i. e.* by the powerful Operation of his holy  
 Spirit, converting the Unbelievers, strength-  
 ening the Faithful, giving Power, and Ef-  
 ficacy to the outward Administrations, and  
 filling Mens Hearts with *Righteousness*,  
*and Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost, i. e.*

SERM. with true *Christian* Virtue, and the blessed Fruits and Effects of it. And this is what is meant by the *Kingdom* of God that is within us.

IX.

THE *Kingdom* of Glory is the last great Demonstration of regal Power, and Mercy, and Justice in the Abolition of Sin, and Death, and the final Award both of the Righteous, and the Wicked; when the King, attended with all his holy Angels, shall sit upon the Throne, and pronounce the Sentence with an irresistible Authority, that shall immediately take place, to *those on his right Hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the Foundation of the World*; but to those on his left, *Depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil, and his Angels*. This last judiciary Act, I say, together with that blessed, and unchangeable Estate, that shall then commence, *when the Saints shall enter upon their Inheritance in Light*, is the *Kingdom of Glory*; wherein the *Righteous shall shine forth as the Sun, and reign with the Lamb for ever and ever*.

Secondly,

*Thy Kingdom come.*

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Secondly, THE next Enquiry is, what S E R M.  
the coming of this *Kingdom*, whether of IX.  
Providence, of Grace, or of Glory, may  
signify.

AND the *Kingdom* of God may then be  
said to come among Men, when the Power  
of it is more eminently exerted, and visibly  
manifested to the World.

THUS, though the Government of Pro-  
vidence commenc'd from the first Crea-  
tion, and has continued, and shall conti-  
nue as long as the World lasts, without  
the least *Inter-regnum*: Yet some certain  
Periods there are, some remarkable Con-  
junctures, in which God does, as it were,  
more immediately interpose his Authority,  
to magnify himself, and convince the  
World, *that verily he is a God, that judgeth  
in the Earth.*

AND upon such Emergencies as these,  
the *Kingdom* of God may be said, with  
much Pomp and Splendour, to come,  
even to those, who before perhaps ei-  
ther disbeliev'd, or little regarded the di-  
vine Providence. And doubtless, thus to  
desire the Promotion of God's Honour,  
humbly acquiescing in his Wisdom for the



SERM. Time, and Manner of the Accomplishment, is a very proper Ingredient in our Prayers.

IX.

Dan. vii.  
14.

THUS again, though the Kingdom of Grace was founded upon antient Promise, and establish'd in the Days of the *Messiah*, and did most miraculously increase and flourish, and spread itself far, and wide in the next succeeding Ages, yet the Bounds of *Christ's* Dominion do not as yet, seem to be of equal Extent with that magnificent Prophecy, *that all People, Nations and Languages should serve him*. For there are dark Corners of the Earth, which the marvelous Light of the Gospel never yet visited, and others from whom the Candlestick hath been judicially removed: But we trust that they also shall at last be deliver'd from the Power of Darkness, and translated into the *Kingdom* of God's dearly beloved Son: And therefore with Respect to them, 'tis a commendable Zeal to pray, *thy Kingdom come*.

AND we have need to pray, *not only for them, but for ourselves, and for our Children*. For though the *Kingdom* of God be come among us, yet it has not the full Posses-

*Thy Kingdom come.*

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Possession of our Hearts; *though we be* SERM.  
*called with an holy, and heavenly Calling,* yet IX.  
our Conversation is vain, secular and sinful; though we are regenerated by the Spirit, yet the Infirmities of the Flesh, and the Remains of our inbred Corruptions are still hanging about us. In short, though *by the Grace of God, we are what we are,* yet we might be much more virtuous, holy, humble and patient, and every Way much more perfect than hitherto we have been; and therefore we have all, even the best of us, need incessantly to pray, *thy Kingdom come,* that God may erect his Throne in our Hearts in the Plenitude of Power, and cast down every Rebel Lust that wars within our Members: And that *Sin may no longer reign in our mortal Bodies, and that we may be deliver'd from the Bondage of Corruption into the glorious Liberty of the Sons of God.*

*Lastly,* though it is not for us to know the Times, and Seasons, which the Father has reserv'd in his own Power, and fix'd by secret Decree, yet inasmuch as it is highly credible, that *Christ's* second Coming is to be usher'd in with the miracu-

SERM.

IX.

lous Conversion of the *Jews*, and since we must all appear before his high Tribunal, both *Jews* and *Gentiles*, we ought so much the rather to give Diligence to make our Calling and Election sure, and to provoke them to a Godly Emulation, that through our Mercy they may obtain Mercy, and that both to them and to us, an Entrance may be ministred abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour *Jesus Christ*. And that Things may be so dispos'd for his Coming, and we, and all the World may be so prepar'd to meet him, is with all Humility implied, when we presume to say, *thy Kingdom come*.

AND having premis'd thus much concerning the *Kingdom* of God according to the several Notions of it in Scripture; as also in what Sense we may pray for *its coming* in all these Respects, I shall now collect the full Import, and Meaning of the Petition from the whole, and set it before you in one View.

WHEN therefore we approach God's holy Presence, to put up this Petition, with Eyes Intent upon his Glory, we do in the first Place acknowledge our dutiful  
 Subjection

*Thy Kingdom come.*

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Subjection to his all-governing Providence, SERM.  
IX.  
and our humble Acquiescence in all its  
wise, and just Dispensations, expressing  
withall a zealous Desire that he would be  
pleas'd to manifest, and magnify his own  
Power so, [as may best conduce to the  
Conviction of Sinners, and the Confirma-  
tion of the Righteous.

MORE especially we pray, that the Go-  
spel may have its 'free Course, that the  
Church of *Christ* may enlarge its Borders  
to all the Ends of the Earth, that the Ig-  
norance of the ruder *Heathens* may be sud-  
denly cur'd, as it were, by *Scales falling*  
*from their Eyes*, and that God would take  
from the *Jews their stony Heart*, and give  
them an *Heart of Flesh*, and that in the  
Riches of his Wisdom, he may at length  
have Mercy upon all, *as he hath concluded*  
*all in Unbelief.*

IN the mean Time 'tis our most earnest  
Prayer, that we (and all they that profess,  
and call themselves *Christians*) that we, I  
say, to whom the divine Power hath given  
all Things that pertain to Life, and God-  
liness, may also be Partakers of the divine  
Nature, having escap'd the Corruption



SERM. that is in the World through Lust; and  
 IX. that the Grace of God may rule more,  
 and more in our Hearts, to the utter sub-  
 duing of all our rebellious Passions, and  
 vicious Inclinations, and the Overthrow of  
 that Dominion, which Sin usurps in our  
 Members.

AND finally, that *Christ* who gave him-  
 self for his Church, that he might sanctify,  
 and cleanse it, would in the Consumma-  
 tion of all Things, present it to himself, as  
 a glorious Church not having Spot, or Wrin-  
 kle, or any such Thing, that so our present  
 mortal State, which at best, is attended  
 with many Infirmities, and mingled with  
 many Imperfections, may be chang'd into  
 an endless Reign of Glory, and Immor-  
 tality.

AND this is what I think amounts to  
 the full Sense, and Meaning of this Pe-  
 tition, *Thy Kingdom come.*

I PROCEED now to the Examination of  
 that which has so near a Connexion with  
 it, *Thy Will be done in Earth, as it is in  
 Heaven.* And the better to understand  
 this, we must *First* acquaint ourselves

WHAT

WHAT the Will of God is, that we are SERM.  
to do; and IX.

*Secondly*, WHAT is the Manner of doing it, that is here propos'd as a Pattern to us. And

*First*, THE Will of God is twofold; his reveal'd Will, and his secret Will.

HIS revealed Will is the whole System of Doctrines and Precepts, which are deliver'd to us in his holy Word, and are the adequate Rule of Faith and Manners.

AND this, no Question, we are oblig'd to observe, and fulfil to the utmost of our Power, to give entire Credence to all his divine Truths, and to yield entire Obedience to all his divine Commands.

HIS secret Will is that whereby he gives the *fiat* to his Decrees, and determines of all the Events, which are to happen in the World. And this cannot be suppos'd to be the Rule of our Actions, even because 'tis secret, and therefore can afford us no Direction: But yet it obliges us to submit implicitly to God's good Pleasure in every Event, and with all Equanimity, and Patience to bear such Sufferings as God in the Course of his Providence

SERM. dence may see good to lay upon us; be-  
 IX. cause it is a piece of Duty to the sove-  
 reign Disposer of all Things, and because  
 'tis what he also requires of us by an ex-  
 press Precept. And as St. *Bernard* well  
 observes, though his Will in this Respect  
 is absolute, and uncontrollable, yet a vo-  
 luntary Submission thereunto, is the pro-  
 per Oblation of a rational Creature, and  
 what God requires, and therefore, no  
 doubt, is willing to accept at his Hand.

NAY, 'tis what our Saviour himself  
 sets us a most glorious Example of, when  
 in the very Bitterness of his Agony he cries  
 out with the greatest Meekness and Re-  
 signation, *Not my Will, but thine be done.*

*Secondly,* As to the Manner of doing  
 the Will of God, which is here propos'd  
 by Way of Imitation, and Instigation to us.

It is taken as *Grotius* imagines, from  
 the Motion of the heavenly Bodies, which  
 is regular, steady, and uniform. So  
 Pf. cxlviii. says the holy *Psalmist* of the Sun, and  
 6. Moon, and all the Stars of Light. *He  
 hath establish'd them for ever and ever, he  
 hath made a Decree which shall not pass,  
 or given them a Law that shall not be  
 broken;*

broken; and in another Place, *He hath* SERM.  
*appointed the Moon for Seasons, and the Sun* IX.  
*knoweth his going down.* And such, so cer- Pf. civ. 19.  
tain, and constant should our Obedience  
be; as punctual, and conformable to the  
Laws of our Creator, as are these heavenly  
Bodies, whose Motions are perpetually gui-  
ded by his mighty Hand.

BUT *Secondly*, The Example will in-  
struct us yet farther, and excite us more  
to a pious Imitation, if we draw it (as in  
all Probability we ought to do) from the  
more excellent Nature, and noble Em-  
ployment of the Angels in Heaven, who,  
as says the *Psalmist*, *excel in Strength, and* Pf. ciii. 28.  
*do his Commandments, hearkening to the*  
*Voice of his Word:* And so should we with  
the same Resolution, and all the Read-  
iness, and dispatch imaginable, in Spight  
of all the Difficulties, and Obstacles that  
may lie in our Way. For though we  
cannot pretend to rival the Angels in our  
natural Powers, yet even *our Strength*  
(small as it is) *is made perfect in Weakness,*  
*since the Power of Christ rests upon us, and*  
*his Grace is sufficient for us.*

AGAIN,



SERM. AGAIN, of them it is said, *That he maketh his Angels Spirits, and his Ministers a flaming Fire.* And so should we aspire to

IX.  
Pf. civ. 4.

be, as active, as fervent, as vigorous as possible; endeavouring by the Aids of divine Grace, as it were, to lay aside the Flesh, and get free from that Clog of Matter, which presses us down to the Earth; and to tend upwards like the Flames constantly to Heaven: And though whilst we are in the Body, we must be liable in some Measure to the Impressions of Sense, and the Incumbrance of Flesh, yet we should desire, and endeavour to *live, not after the Flesh; but after the Spirit.*

ONCE more, it is said of the Angels, that they are the *Servants of God that do his Pleasure.* And, no doubt, their Employment is their Satisfaction, and their Happiness. And so should we esteem ours, for we also are his Servants, though in an inferior Rank. It is not our Office to denounce his Woes, or execute his Judgments, but to obey his Precepts it is, such as are suited to our Nature, and Condition; and if we make his Law our Delight, and pay him a cheerful Obedience, in every

very Instance of our Duty, God will accept SERM.  
our Service, and as a Reward for our IX.  
Faithfulness will at last make us *Children*  
*of the Resurrection*, and equal to the An-  
gels.

AND having thus learned what the Will of God is that is to be done, and what the Manner of doing it, that is here recommended to our Imitation, we may easily make a Judgment of the true Intent, and Meaning of the Petition.

FOR herein we profess to make an entire Submission of ourselves to God's Disposal, together with a perfect Resignation of our own Judgments, Wills, Wishes and Affections, wheresoever they may happen, (as they are but too apt) to interfere with his holy Commandments, or wise Counsels; desiring nothing so much, as that he would perfect us in every good Work to do his Will, and also work in us that which is well pleasing in his Sight. And to that End, as being conscious of the Infirmities of our sinful Nature, we implore the supernatural Assistance of the Holy Spirit, to enable us to perform an acceptable Obedience unto God both active and pas-  
sive;

SERM. five; and more particularly to be with us,  
 XI. support us, and carry us thorough those  
 Duties which are most difficult to be perform'd, or most grievous to be born by Flesh and Blood. And to preserve this Frame, and Temper of Mind, or to quicken ourselves when we grow remiss, we set before our Eyes the Example of the heavenly Bodies, the Steadiness, and Uniformity of whose Motion is a just Reproach to the Inconstancy, the Deviations, and Irregularities of the Life of Man.

AND we propose to ourselves the more lively Pattern of the holy Angels, those bright Intelligencers above, whose Readiness and Alacrity, whose Vigour, and Activity in God's Service, is a noble Spur to our Zeal, and well worthy of our Imitation.

AND therefore we beg God's farther Assistance, that we may approach as near the Perfection of Angels as 'tis possible, whilst we are cloath'd with Mortality; but to be sure, that we may be able to maintain that Rank, and Station which he allotted us, and to do that Work, which he sent us into the World to do; and that we may not break the sweet Harmony of  
 the

the univerſal Choir of Creatures, animate S E R M.  
and inanimate, who all of them with one IX.  
Voice give Glory to their great Creatour,  
by obſerving the Laws of their Creation,  
and doing his Pleaſure; that Man, dege-  
nerate Man, may not ſtand ſingular, and  
appear the only Rebel in the Univerſe,  
ſince the Fall of the apoſtate Angels.

AND now, having accounted for the  
Meaning of the Petitions,

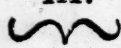
II. *Secondly*, I SHALL briefly ſhew you  
how apt the due Conſideration of them, is  
to ſtir up ſuch holy Affections, and Diſpo-  
ſitions in our Hearts, as ought to accom-  
pany our Prayers.

AND they are more particularly theſe  
three: *First*, a firm Purpoſe of Obe-  
dience. *Secondly*, an entire Reſignation of  
Soul to Almighty God. And *Thirdly*, a  
Fervour in our Devotions, and Alacrity in  
all our religious Duties.

*First*, A FIRM Purpoſe of Obedience to  
God's holy Laws. For if we be ſincerely  
deſirous, that *the Kingdom of God ſhould*  
*come* among us, that it ſhould be eſta-  
bliſh'd in its full Power, and in its due  
Extent,



SERM. Extent, that Desire must imply a ready

IX.  Disposition, an hearty Resolution to submit to his Authority, to observe his Precepts, and to put ourselves entirely under his Guidance and Governance. And if we do at all attend to what we are a doing, whenever we take this Petition into our Mouths, we must be put in Mind to make a Tender of this our bounden Duty and Service. For it would be inconsistent, and absurd to pretend to desire that God would exercise his sovereign Right, and take us into his immediate Governance, when we have neither Intention, nor Inclination to obey his Laws, and behave ourselves as becomes his dutiful Subjects. To prefer such a Request with Rebellion in the Heart, would be at once to mock God, and defy him even in a pretended Act of Adoration. If therefore we have any just Regard to God's awful Dominion, any due Sense of our own Subjection, the Tenor of this Petition doth bespeak, and will beget the most resolved Obedience.

*Secondly, IF we attentively consider the Affinity between the two Petitions, Thy Kingdom*

*Kingdom come, and thy Will be done,* we shall not only be ready to obey God's holy Laws, but willing entirely to resign to his good Pleasure. For if we do indeed acknowledge God for our sovereign Lord and Ruler, if we do unfeignedly desire to be govern'd by him, that Desire will infer a Willingness to commit ourselves, and all our Affairs into his Hands, and to leave them contentedly to his Disposal. And, if we pray with affectionate Sincerity, that the Kingdom of *Christ* may mightily prevail, and conquer every Rebel Lust, that his Grace may rule in our Hearts, and fit us for his Glory in Heaven, this will incline us, quietly to submit to all his wise Methods of Discipline, that he shall see best to conduct us to the End of our Faith, and Hope; this will dispose us to be not only tractable in bearing the Yoke of Obedience, but patient in enduring any Burden of Affliction, that God shall see fit to lay upon us: In one Word, this will enure us not only to commend ourselves to his keeping, but even to surrender our very Wills into his absolute Direction, that so we may send up this Petition in the true

SERM.  
IX.  
~

SER M. Spirit of him, who taught it us, and say,  
 IX. as implicitly as *Christ* did submissively,  
*Not my Will, but thine be done.*

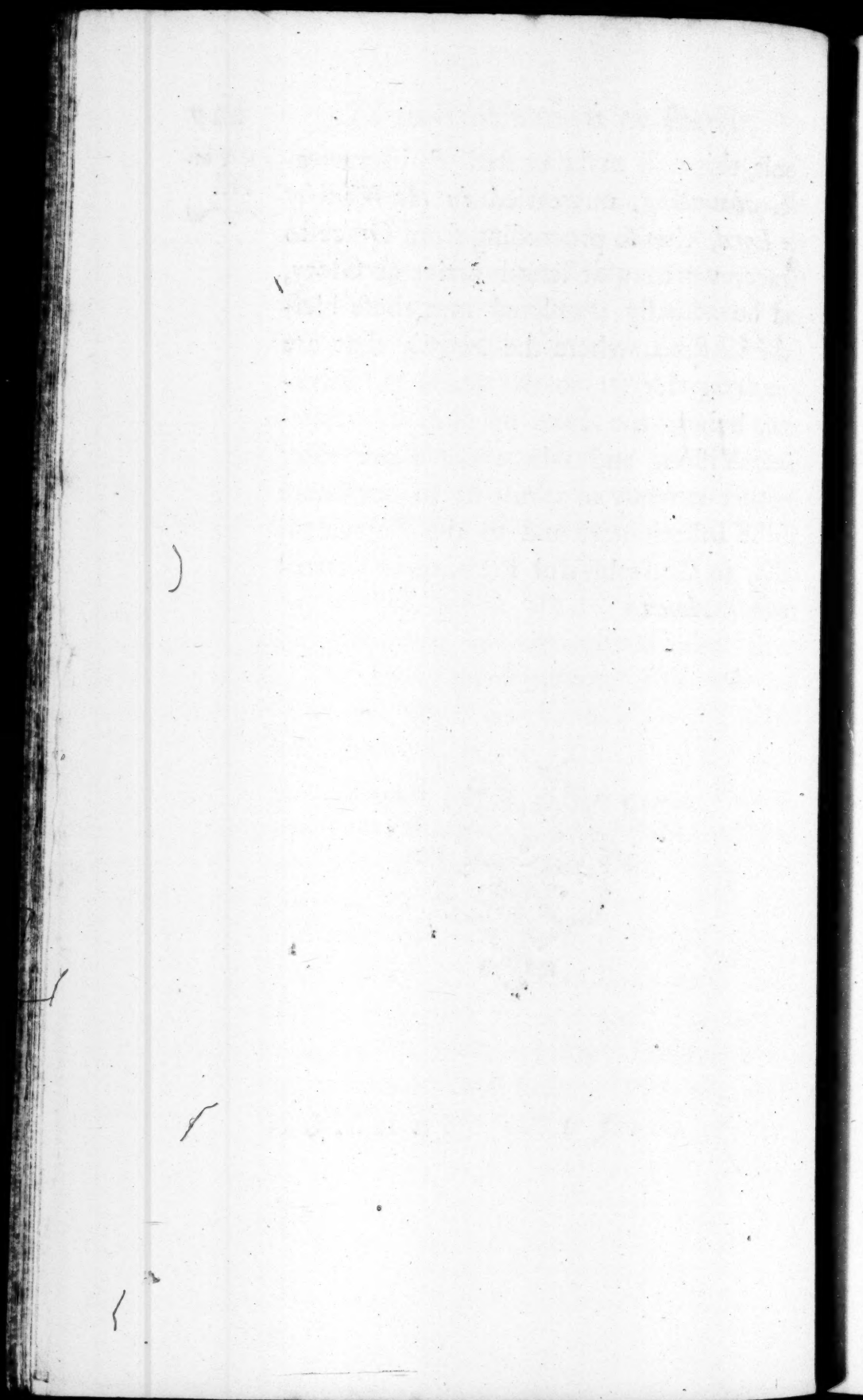
*Thirdly and Lastly,* WHEN we pray, let *thy Will be done in Earth, as it is in Heaven*, we direct our Eye towards a Pattern, that naturally excites us to Alacrity, and Fervour in our Devotion, as well as Constancy, and Uniformity in all religious Duties. For if it be our zealous Desire, that the Will of God should in all Points be fulfill'd, after the Pattern of his blessed Angels, who are of his immediate Retinue, and always attend the Beck of his sovereign Pleasure, this will inspire us with an Emulation of doing like them, that we may be like them; this will not only enkindle the Fire of Devotion in our Hearts, but make it flame out into Rapture, this will wing our Prayers, and send up our Affections to take Possession of the heavenly Places aforehand; where our Prayers shall cease with our Wants, and *Praises* and *Hallelujahs* shall be the never-ceasing Language of our exalted Joy and Love. This also will invigorate all the active Powers of our  
 Souls,

Souls, this will make us stedfast, immovea-  
ble, *abounding*, unwearied in the Work of  
the Lord, that so proceeding from Grace to  
Grace, we may at length arrive at Glory,  
and be actually translated into those blef-  
fed Mansions, where the *Angels*, that are  
*ministring Spirits* to the Heirs of Salva-  
tion, behold the Face of God by imme-  
diate Vision, and where *Christ* our elder  
Brother is ready to admit us to our Share  
of the Inheritance, and to the Enjoyment  
of it, in God's blissful Presence to eternal  
Ages. *Amen.*

SER M.  
IX.









# S E R M O N X.

Give us this Day our daily Bread.

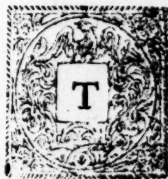


MATTH. vi. 11.

*Give us this Day our daily Bread.*

LUKE xi. 3.

*Day by Day our daily Bread.*



THE three *First* Petitions of SERM.  
our Lord's Prayer (as has been X.  
observ'd) are directed imme-  
diately up towards Heaven,  
with Eyes intent upon the *Glory* of God,  
and that *alone*, exclusive of any By-respect  
to our own Interest. I say, exclusive of  
Q.3 any

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SER M. any By-respect to our own Interest. For,  
X. in the last Result of Things, whether we  
intend it, or whether we intend it not,  
such our Actions as do most conduce to  
God's Glory, do also actually constitute,  
and will finally compleat our own Happi-  
ness.

THIS is plain from the Tenour of the  
foregoing Petitions. For doubtless, there  
can be no happier State, nothing more de-  
sirable to the Sons of Men, than to live  
in the Fear of the Lord, that is, to enter-  
tain a just Admiration of, and a most pro-  
found Veneration for his glorious Attri-  
butes and Perfections, to serve before him  
with Reverence, and to comport their  
whole Lives answerably to such their Ap-  
prehensions: Than to enjoy the Benefit,  
and Comfort of his providential Govern-  
ment, to taste, and feel the sweet Influence  
of his Grace, and Peace ruling in their  
Hearts: Than to yield an entire Obedience,  
and Submission to his blessed Will, and in  
the faithful Discharge of their Duty, hum-  
bly to expect their perfect Consummation  
and Bliss in everlasting Glory. I say, doubt-  
less, as the Name of God is hereby glo-  
rified,

*Give us this Day our daily Bread.* 231

rified, so is the Happiness of Man, and his SERM.  
supreme Good effectually promoted; and X.  
that is his *Comfort* upon the *Way*, which  
in the End will be his Crown.

BUT however, though the Glory of  
God, and Man's Happiness do at last meet  
in the same Point, yet it would ill become  
us, when we are paying *him* that Ho-  
mage, and Tribute which is his only *Due*,  
to have an equal Respect to ourselves, *who*  
*are less than the least of all his Mercies.*  
No; we are in all Gratitude oblig'd to of-  
fer him the first Fruits of our disinter-  
ested Zeal and Love, by acknowledging,  
and setting forth that divine Honour and  
Praise, of which *he alone* is worthy, and  
by desiring, and endeavouring to make it  
still more glorious in such Methods, as *he*  
in his Wisdom has appointed.

THIS probably may be the Reason of  
that Order, which our *Lord* has observ'd  
in this admirable Composition of his own,  
which ought to be our Pattern.

AND, after so laudable a Beginning, we  
may be allow'd; nay, we are here di-  
rected to consider our own Indigence, and  
Infirmities, and to ask for those Things

Q 4

which



232 *Give us this Day our daily Bread.*

SERM. which are needful, and expedient for us;  
X. and to that Intent it is that we pray, *Give  
us this Day our daily Bread.* In the Examination of which Petition, I shall

I. *First*, ACQUAINT you with its true Sense, and full Import. And

II. *Secondly*, I SHALL take notice of such holy Affections and Dispositions, as do seem naturally to arise from the Consideration of the Petition when rightly understood, and with which it ought always to be accompany'd.

AND in order to acquaint you with the true Sense, and full Import of the Petition, I shall

*First*, ENQUIRE into the Signification of the Words in which it is express'd. And

*Secondly*, CONSIDER what may be fairly implied, and comprehended under such Expressions.

*First*, As for the Words, they are few, and not hard, if we can but make our Way through those critical Niceties, with which Interpreters needlessly perplex the Text.

WE

*Give us this Day our daily Bread.* 233

WE pray for *Bread*; for our *daily Bread*: SERM.  
And that we may have it *this Day*. X.

AND for the Signification of the Word *Bread* we cannot be much at a Loss. For we all know that it signifies a certain sort of Food, which is one great Part of our ordinary Sustenance; and is therefore in Scripture called the *Stay*, and the *Staff*, as Is. iii. 1. being the main Support of our Strength, and Life. But because, there are other Things requisite to sustain, and cherish Nature, besides mere Bread, therefore the Word is frequently taken (as here it is) in a larger Sense, (answerable to *Viētus* in *Latin*, and *Βίϑη* in *Greek*) for Meat, Drink, and Cloathing, and all the nearest *Necessaries of Life*, without which we could not tolerably subsist.

THE Word *ἐπιούσιον*, which we translate *daily*, has given the *Critics* much Trouble to derive it Grammatically. And there are two several Ways of deducing it, both of them grounded upon pretty plausible Conjectures, but neither of them, as far as I can see, upon any such certain Reason, as should oblige us wholly to set aside the other. And from *either*, or perhaps,

234 *Give us this Day our daily Bread.*

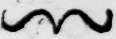
SERM. haps, from both join'd together, there will  
 X. result a Sense, that is easy, and natural enough, and agreeable to the Matter of the Petition.

FOR if we derive it with St. *Jerome* from ἐπιῶσα, that is the Day approaching, or the Morrow, not precisely taken for the Day immediately following, but for any indefinite Space of Time, that is future, (as it is us'd *Exod. xiii. 14. Jos. iv. 5. Prov. xxvii. 1.* and in several other Places;) I say, if we derive it from hence, then *that* which we call our *daily Bread* will signify, as much as is requisite, and proportionable to the Remainder of our Lives, be they longer or shorter.

IF we deduce it (which is the other Origination that they assign of it) from ὅτι and ῥοία, then it will signify as much as is necessary, and sufficient for our Subsistence, or as *Agur* expresses it, *the Food that is convenient for us.*

AND, if we put both these Significations into one, then it must be understood of such a competent Provision, as may be commensurate to the Time we have to live, and

*Give us this Day our daily Bread.* 235

and answerable to our constant Needs, and SERM.  
Occasions; for which Reason 'tis rendred X.  
not amiss, *our daily Bread.* 

For which we are taught to pray, *this Day*, that is, as St. *Luke* interprets it, *Day by Day*, as constantly as one Day succeeds another; for so often do our mowldring Bodies crave for Succour and Recruits, so often do our natural Necessities call for present Supplies.

AND having thus briefly accounted for the Signification of the Words, in which the Petition is express'd. I proceed

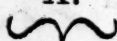
*Secondly*, To consider what may be fairly implied, and couch'd under such Expressions.

Now the Words may be resolv'd into two several Senses; one of which is more simple and natural, relating to the Necessaries of this mortal Life; the other more figurative and spiritual, relating to the Succours of God's Holy Spirit.

THE former Sense offers itself first, and is so in the Order of Nature, inasmuch as Life is the Foundation of all Blessings,  
and



S E R M. and he that does not live at all, can neither live spiritually, nor happily: The latter is in Dignity before the other, as much as the divine Life exceeds the Animal.

X.  


IN the *First* Sense, namely that which relates to the Necessaries of the animal Life, there seem to me to be these three Things implied:

*First*, A competent Maintenance.

*Secondly*, THE Continuance of it from Time to Time.

*Thirdly*, THE Benediction of God along with it.

I SAY, these three Things seem to be of Course implied in the Petition.

FOR unless the daily Bread we pray for be sufficient to maintain us, and unless such our Maintenance be constantly afforded to us so long as we stand in Need of it, and unless God be pleas'd to sanctify it to us in the Use, our Request, even when obtain'd, would yield us but slender Comfort, would prove but a starving Blessing.

THE *First* Thing therefore, I say, that is here imply'd, is, a competent Maintenance; and this, though it is not to be

*Give us this Day our daily Bread.* 237

be defin'd to a Scruple, yet it may easily S E R M.  
be reduc'd to a common Measure. And X.  
that Measure is to be taken, either from  
the mere Necessities of Nature, or the different Circumstances of Life.

If we consult no more than the pure Cravings and Necessities of Nature, that's a Competency which suffices Nature; *i. e.* which is sufficient to satisfy our Hunger and Thirst, which are natural Appetites, necessary for the Preservation of Life: And to secure us against the Injuries of the Weather, which our Bodies are, generally speaking, too tender to bear, without some convenient Covering. And, these Appetites, and Sensations being pretty equally distributed amongst all Mankind, that which is a Competency to one Man in this Respect, would, with a very small Addition or Subtraction, be a Competence to another, and the Difference in the whole would be but very inconsiderable.

BUT, if we take a View of the different Circumstances of humane Life, we shall find, that as the all-wise Providence has plac'd Men in several Ranks, and Conditions in the World, so each of these  
Ranks

SERMON. Ranks and Conditions has its several Exigencies and Conveniences. And consequently that which is fit and convenient for one Man in one Condition, may not be so for another Man in another Condition. From whence it will follow again, that that at last is a competent Maintenance to every particular Man, that is suited, and proportion'd to that particular State of Life in which he is placed.

For instance; the poor Labourer, *if he* has but wherewithal to support himself in Health and Strength, and to maintain his Family in a coarse, homely Manner, *this is the Food that is convenient for him*, this is his *Portion* that he is to pray for; and by the Help of which, he ought contentedly, and thankfully to train up his Children in the same painful Way, to which he *himself* has been inur'd, and to commit them to the same good Providence, upon which he has comfortably depended.

BUT the same scanty Allowance will not be sufficient for the Tradesman, who, besides the Provision for his Wife and Children, must employ Servants in his Business, and keep a Stock a going, to carry  
on

*Give us this Day our daily Bread.* 239

on his Traffic. And in all this, being <sup>SERM.</sup> subject to more Expence, and Hazard <sup>X.</sup> than the other, his Competence must be such as may enable him to defray the Charge, and perform the Duty of that Calling, in which he has been educated.

ONCE more; the Quality of a Gentleman, and the Character of a Magistrate will stand in need of Supplies that are yet larger. For such Persons, besides their ordinary Care and Cost, being subject to considerable Expences, which Custom and Decency, Charity and Hospitality, and the Service of their Countrey, do in a Manner exact from them, that will be but a Competency for them, which is enough to answer all these Purposes, in some Proportion to their Dignity and Degree.

AND thus, according as Men's Circumstances vary in the World, a proportionable Difference will arise, which ought to be the general, (though variable) Standard of what shall be every one's competent Maintenance.

AND from hence I conclude, that a competent Maintenance, thus stated, and bounded is fairly imply'd in this Petition;



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SERM. that is to say, that, when we pray for  
 X. *our daily Bread*, we may, and ought to  
 have Regard to that Rank and Station,  
 which we are to hold in the World, and  
 to beg a *Sufficiency* accommodate there-  
 unto.

THE Reason of which (if it wants any farther Confirmation) is plainly this, *viz.* that what God in the constant Course of his Providence has made necessary, cannot be unlawful to pray for; so far from that, that it becomes a Man's Duty to pray for it, in Compliance with that Providence which so order'd Things. And therefore, the Man, who prays for such a Portion of worldly Things, as is needful, and requisite in *his* Condition, does most certainly pray according to our *blessed Saviour's* perfect Pattern; provided he has withal a sincere Design so to employ, and bestow the good Things he hopes to receive, as becomes a Man in that Condition; and be ready to submit to God's good Pleasure, whether he receive them or no.

I INTERPOSE these Cautions, to prevent such wilful Mistakes as People are apt to make upon this Occasion. For though we

*Give us this Day our daily Bread.* 241

are graciously allow'd to pray for a competent Maintenance, yet it ought always to be with an Intention to apply it to its proper End and Use, and with humble Resignation to God's wise Disposal; otherwise we shall pray, not for a Competence, but rather for something to abuse and pervert.

SERM.  
X.

— For Example; when a Man in a public Station, desires an answerable Fortune; not that he may be enabled to discharge his Office the more honourably, nor serve his Countrey more effectually, nor make his Beneficence the more diffusive, but that he may fill his Coffers apace, and amass a great deal of Wealth; I say, 'tis plain in this Case, that 'tis not a Competence he aims at; for less would serve his Turn, if he has no other Use to put it to. And therefore his Prayer, as being the Effect of Avarice, and an inordinate Love of the World, is fit only to put up to an unrighteous *Mammon*, and not to the God of Heaven.

Thus again; when a Trader wishes for what seems to suit with his Condition; not to provide honestly for those who depend

242 *Give us this Day our daily Bread.*

SERM. on him, but rather to *make Provision for*  
 X. *the Flesh to fulfil the Lusts thereof*; here  
 also, I say, 'tis evident, that 'tis not a  
 Competence, but Superfluity that he longs  
 for; since, even as Things are, he can  
 find in his Heart to spend that in Riot and  
 Luxury, for want of which, his Family  
 perhaps is starving.

AND though it would be hard to con-  
 clude as much of every one, that is impa-  
 tient under the Dispensations of Provi-  
 dence; yet his very Impatience is a shrewd  
 Sign of an irregular, and vicious Appetite,  
 that craves more than is necessary, or of a  
 foolish, and unthankful Heart, that can  
 dispute it even with infinite Wisdom, a-  
 bout what is convenient, and what is not  
 so. When perhaps the good God, even  
 whilst he withholds the Food from him,  
 that might be thought convenient, is ad-  
 ministring the Physic, that is much more  
 wholesome.

UPON the whole therefore; a compe-  
 tent Maintenance is certainly to be pray'd  
 for, as being included in this Petition, but  
 not so, as to set up our own ill-govern'd  
 Appetites for Judges of it, and suffer them

*Give us this Day our daily Bread.* 243

to debate the Expediency with God himself. S E R M.  
X.

THE *Second* Thing, which I conceive to be imply'd in this Petition, is the Continuance of such Maintenance, and that from Time to Time, so long as we shall have occasion for it; that is to say, as long as we live. For the bare Possession of the good Things which we receive from the divine Bounty, does not give us an indefeisible Right to them. The sovereign Lord of all Things does not give up his Propriety in any of his Creatures, by lending us the Use of them. And therefore, since he that gave, may at his Pleasure take away again, we are obliged to implore his Goodness for the Continuance of the Gift, as well as the first Donation.

THAT such, and so absolute is our Dependence upon God, and so arbitrary the Tenure of what we hold by his mere Favour, is apparent from diverse Passages in Scripture; particularly the *cvi<sup>th</sup> Psalm*, *Ps. 33, &c.* where it is said, that *he turneth Rivers into a Wilderness, and the Water-springs into dry Ground: A fruitful Land maketh he barren for the Wicked-*

R 2

*ness*



SERMON. *ness of them that dwell therein. He turn-*  
 X. *eth the Wilderness into a standing Water,*  
*and dry Ground into Water-springs. And*  
*there he maketh the Hungry to dwell, that*  
*they may prepare a City for their Habita-*  
*tion. And sow the Fields, and plant Vine-*  
*yards, which may yield Fruits of Increase.*  
*He blesteth them also, so that they are multi-*  
*plied greatly, and suffereth not their Cat-*  
*tle to decrease. Again they are minished,*  
*and brought low through Oppression, Af-*  
*liction and Sorrow. He poureth Contempt*  
*upon Princes, and causeth them to wander*  
*in the Wilderness, where no Way is.*

FROM all which we may collect, that all Estates, and Conditions of Men are in God's supreme Disposal, and that all the Vicissitudes, and Changes that happen, are by his Appointment, and that they are subservient to his Providence in the governing of the World, and punishing, and restraining the Sins of Mankind.

AND 'tis wisely so contriv'd, in order to make Men sensible of that Subjection which they owe to God, and the Dependance they have upon him; which it well becomes us all, both Rich and Poor, to express

*Give us this Day our daily Bread.* 245

press, and testify with all Humility, when S E R M.  
we pray, as in this Petition, for *our daily* X.  
*Bread*: The Rich, that his Trust in the  
living God may secure to him the Posses-  
sion of his uncertain Riches for the fu-  
ture: The Poor that he may still be sup-  
plied out of the Stores of *his* Bounty, who  
satisfieth the Desire of every living Thing.

AND this Part of our Request we ought  
to renew *Day by Day*, because we are con-  
tinually subject to Changes and Chances,  
and *cannot tell what the Morrow may bring*  
*forth*. Nay, if we would be safe and easy,  
we must cast the Care, and Burden of our  
whole Life (for the Time to come) upon  
God, by which Means we shall get rid at  
once of all that Solitude and Anxiety,  
which torment, and crucify a worldly  
Mind. Not that Providence is suppos'd  
to supersede all humane Care and In-  
dustry; we might as well conclude, that  
the Art of Spinning, and Weaving is to  
cease, because the *Lillies neither toil nor*  
*spin*: But the Care which we shall avoid  
hereby, is inconsistent both with our Duty,  
and our Ease; a carking, fretting, and re-  
pinning Care, that argues Disregard, and  
R 3 Distrust

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SERM. Distrust of the good Providence of God;  
 X. which to be sure, an ordinary Application,  
 and the Use of common Prudence and  
 Foresight do not, especially when we re-  
 commend both to God in our daily Pray-  
 ers, and refer ourselves for the Issue to  
 his wise Disposal.

AND for the Reasons afore-given, and  
 upon the Terms now mention'd, it is here  
 imply'd, that we should beg the Conti-  
 nuance of such Provision, as God shall see  
 convenient for us, for the Remainder of  
 our Lives.

*Thirdly*, THE *last* Thing imply'd as  
 needful to be pray'd for in this Petition,  
 is the Benediction of God, upon what we  
 have, and what we ask. For without all  
 doubt, there is Truth and Weight in what  
 Pf. xxxvii. the *Psalmist* says, *That a little which the*  
 16. *Righteous hath, is better than the Riches of*  
*many Wicked.* And why? But because the  
 Blessing of God goes along with it, and  
 gives the Possessor a gracious Heart to use  
 and enjoy it, to the Donor's Glory, and  
 his own Comfort.

AND without this blessed Advantage, no  
 earthly Possession deserves the Name of an  
 Enjoyment;

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Enjoyment; so far from that, that it is S E R M.  
rather a Disappointment and Vexation. X.

TAKE an Example of this from the covetous Man, who in the midst of all his Plenty is so far from enjoying any Thing, that the very Name we call him by is *Wretch*; and so very wretched he is, that oftentimes, though there is no End of his Labour, nor is his Eye satisfied with Riches, yet he cannot so much as say to himself, *for whom do I labour, and bereave my* Eccles. iv.  
*Soul of Good?* And whence is all this? <sup>8.</sup>

The wise Man will inform us, that tho' God has given him *Wealth, Honour and* Eccles. vi.  
*Riches, yet he hath not given him Power to* <sup>2.</sup>  
*eat thereof, but a Stranger eateth it.* And this certainly, if any Thing is Vanity, and it is an evil Disease.

TAKE another Instance from the violent Oppressor, of whom *Job* gives but a tragical Account in the 20<sup>th</sup> Chapter, *Y 19, &c. How that, because he hath oppressed, and forsaken the Poor; and because he hath violently taken away the House that he build-*  
*ed not: Surely he shall not feel Quietness in his Belly, he shall not save of that which he desired. In the Fullness of his Sufficiency,*

R 4

he



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SERM. *he shall be in Straits, and every Hand of*  
 X. *the Wicked shall be upon him. When he is*  
 about to fill his Belly, God shall cast the  
 Fury of his Wrath upon him, and shall rain  
 it upon him, while he is eating. And that  
 we may see that this is a Matter fix'd and  
 determin'd; we are told in the Conclu-  
 Ver. 29. sion, *that this is the Portion of the wicked*  
*Man from God, and the Heritage appointed*  
*unto him by God.* Since therefore the Pos-  
 sessions, and Acquests of the Wicked are  
 turned into Curses, and since 'tis the Lord  
 only that can command a Blessing upon  
 our Store-houses, and all that we set our  
 Hands unto; since 'tis not by Bread alone  
 that we live, but by every Word that pro-  
 ceedeth out of the Mouth of the Lord, it  
 must be implied when we ask for our daily  
 Bread, that we also beg his Blessing to  
 sanctify it to us in the Use.

AND thus far I have given you an Ac-  
 count of what I suppose to be implied in  
 the Petition, according to its obvious, and  
 natural Sense. But, as Dr. Hammond ob-  
 serves, there is a spiritual Sense, which to  
 be sure in so divine a Prayer as this is,  
 ought not to be overlook'd; and in this  
 Respect

*Give us this Day our daily Bread.* 249

Respect *Bread* is put for the Grace of SERM.  
God, that Food of the Soul without which X.  
it can no more sustain itself, than the Bo-  
dy can without Meat and Drink. And  
therefore in praying for *our daily Bread*,  
it is also implied, that we ask for that Mea-  
sure of continual Grace, which will suf-  
fice to carry us through all the Difficul-  
ties, and Trials that we may be like to  
meet with in our Christian Warfare, and  
that we desire it, and expect it only in the  
Use of those Means, which God has ap-  
pointed as his Instruments of Conveyance,  
namely, his blessed Word and Sacra-  
ments.

BUT this Implication, though it is of  
great Worth and Weight, yet since it a-  
rises from a secondary Sense that is graft-  
ed upon the other, I shall not enlarge  
upon it.

IN the mean Time, I hope, from what  
has been said, that we shall be able to ga-  
ther the true Import, and Meaning of the  
Petition; which to my Apprehension is  
this.

WE do hereby in the *First* Place ac-  
knowledge, and adore our *heavenly Father*

as

S E R M. as the Author, and Preserver of our Beings,

X. and the *Giver of every good Gift*. And in  
 Confidence of this, we presume to make  
 known our Wants, and pray for a suitable  
 Supply out of the Stores of God's Bounty,  
 and the Riches of his Grace. And, as  
 the Exigence of Things requires, we pray  
 first for a competent Maintenance, *i. e.* for  
 such a Portion of worldly Goods, as may  
 be sufficient to support us for the remain-  
 ing Part of our Lives, in that Rank, and  
 Condition which Providence has allotted us.  
 And because there is nothing so constant and  
 certain in this World, as are our daily Ne-  
 cessities, we pray also for the gracious  
 Continuance of that *Demensum*, or Com-  
 petence which God in his Goodness shall  
 see most needful, or expedient for us.  
 And we pray, not barely that we may re-  
 ceive these good Things at the Hand of  
 God, but that we may receive them with  
*his* Blessing, and use them to his Glory,  
 and so enjoy them to our own Comfort.

NOR do we forget our spiritual Wants,  
 which are every whit as pressing as those  
 that concern the Body, and so much the  
 more important, as the Soul is more ex-  
 cellent

*Give us this Day our daily Bread.* 251

cellent than the Body; and therefore we SERM.  
omit not in this Petition, to pray for such X.  
a Measure of Grace as may be sufficient  
for us, that we may use it, and encrease  
it, and be daily strengthen'd with Might  
in the inner Man; and in Virtue of this  
super-substantial Bread, the true Bread of  
Life, we may be nourish'd unto Life ever-  
lasting.

HAVING thus explain'd the Meaning of  
this Petition, I shall briefly shew what  
those holy Affections of Soul are, that  
seem naturally to arise from it, and with  
which therefore it will be most properly  
accompanied.

AND they are principally these follow-  
ing: *First*, An humble Sense of humane  
Infirmities. *Secondly*, A constant Depen-  
dence upon God's good Providence. *Thirdly*,  
A thankful Contentedness with our pre-  
sent Allotment. *Fourthly*, A charitable  
Concern for our needy Brethren.

*First*, AN humble Sense of the Indi-  
gency, and Infirmary of humane Nature.

FOR certainly, when we are upon our  
Knees begging for our daily Subsistence,  
we ought to make ourselves seriously sen-  
sible,



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SER M. fible, how frail, and feeble our Composition is, how poor, and naked we naturally are, how much we want for our necessary Support, and how little we have in our own Power.

X.  
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It is the Sense of this indeed, that brings us upon our Knees, and by a Sort of natural Instinct teaches us to pray, and sends us to God our Creator and Preserver, to him *in whom we live, and move, and have our Being*; to him who made us weak, and yet mightily supports us; who made us poor, and yet supplies us richly out of his own Fulness: And the Sense of this should make us always humble in his Sight, ever ready to own, and adore our bountiful Benefactor.

AND as those who live in Plenty have so much the greater Obligation to be thankful for the Bounty of Heaven, so have they never the less Reason to be still mindful of their natural Indigence: For be their Condition never so plentiful, he that gave can take away, it is in God's Power to distress, or reduce them, and without his Blessing, even their Plenty may prove useless, if not fatal to them; it may
surfeit

Give us this Day our daily Bread. 253

surfeit instead of nourishing, it cannot re-
store Nature when languishing, it cannot
protract Life when expiring. This is what
we should all be duly sensible of, when we
present this Petition to God, even *that*
Man in his best Estate is altogether Vanity,
that his very Being is nothing, unless the
powerful Word of God support it.

Secondly, WHEN we become humble
Suitors to God for our daily Bread, it
should be with the most entire Reliance
on his good Providence. For to this very
End indeed are we taught thus to pray,
that we might preserve a religious Sense
of our Dependance upon God constantly
in our Minds, and at the same Time ex-
press our Confidence in his All-sufficiency.
And how conscious soever we be of our
own Weaknesses and Wants, we can have
no Reason to doubt of God's Power and
Goodness: Of this we have even sensible
Demonstration, we see, and know, that
the World is stor'd with Abundance of
Provisions, with all that can be needful
for the Support, or Comfort of Mankind.
And we have all the Assurance, that the
Benignity of God's Nature, or the Gra-
ciousness

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SERM. cioufness of his Promises can give us, that
 X. we shall be kindly sustain'd, and constantly
 supplied out of the Stores of his Bounty, *who giveth to all Breath and Life, and all Things.* And with this well-grounded Assurance, we may comfortably pray to our heavenly Father for such Things as he knows we have Need of, and upon this Assurance we may safely rest, in the Use of such Means as he himself hath appointed, that is to say, a provident Care, and honest Industry of our own, but without any carking Solitude, or any Recourse to dishonest Arts or Shifts, which would be utterly inconsistent with our Affiance in God.

Thirdly, THIS Petition for our daily Bread ought always to proceed from a Heart that is truly contented with, and thankful for the present Allotment. For as we depend upon the Goodness, so ought we to submit to the Wisdom of divine Providence.

If we were to consult Appetite, or indulge our own Wishes, we might be apt enough vainly to think, that we could chuse, and carve better for ourselves, that
 we

Give us this Day our daily Bread. 255

we could mend our Condition considerably S E R M.
by enlarging it. But this is most infallible, X.
that infinite Wisdom knows best what is
most convenient for every one of us. God
knows not only what we really want, but
what we are able to bear, and wisely pro-
portions his Allowance accordingly. He
knows how to make his common Gifts
truly beneficial to us, and our temporal
State subservient to our eternal Interest.
It is very fitting, and becoming therefore,
that in asking for *our daily Bread*, we
should be ready thankfully to accept that
Portion which he is pleas'd to allot us,
as being entirely satisfied, however sparing
it may seem, or be, it is certainly most
salutary for us.

Fourthly, THIS Petition ought ever to
be accompanied with a charitable Concern
for our more needy Brethren. For tho'
God hath made a Provision sufficient for
the whole Race of Mankind, yet are the
Apportionments to particular Persons une-
qually dispens'd. Some there are that a-
bound, and others that suffer Need: And
it is the Intendment of God's Providence;
nay, 'tis his most express Will, that all
these

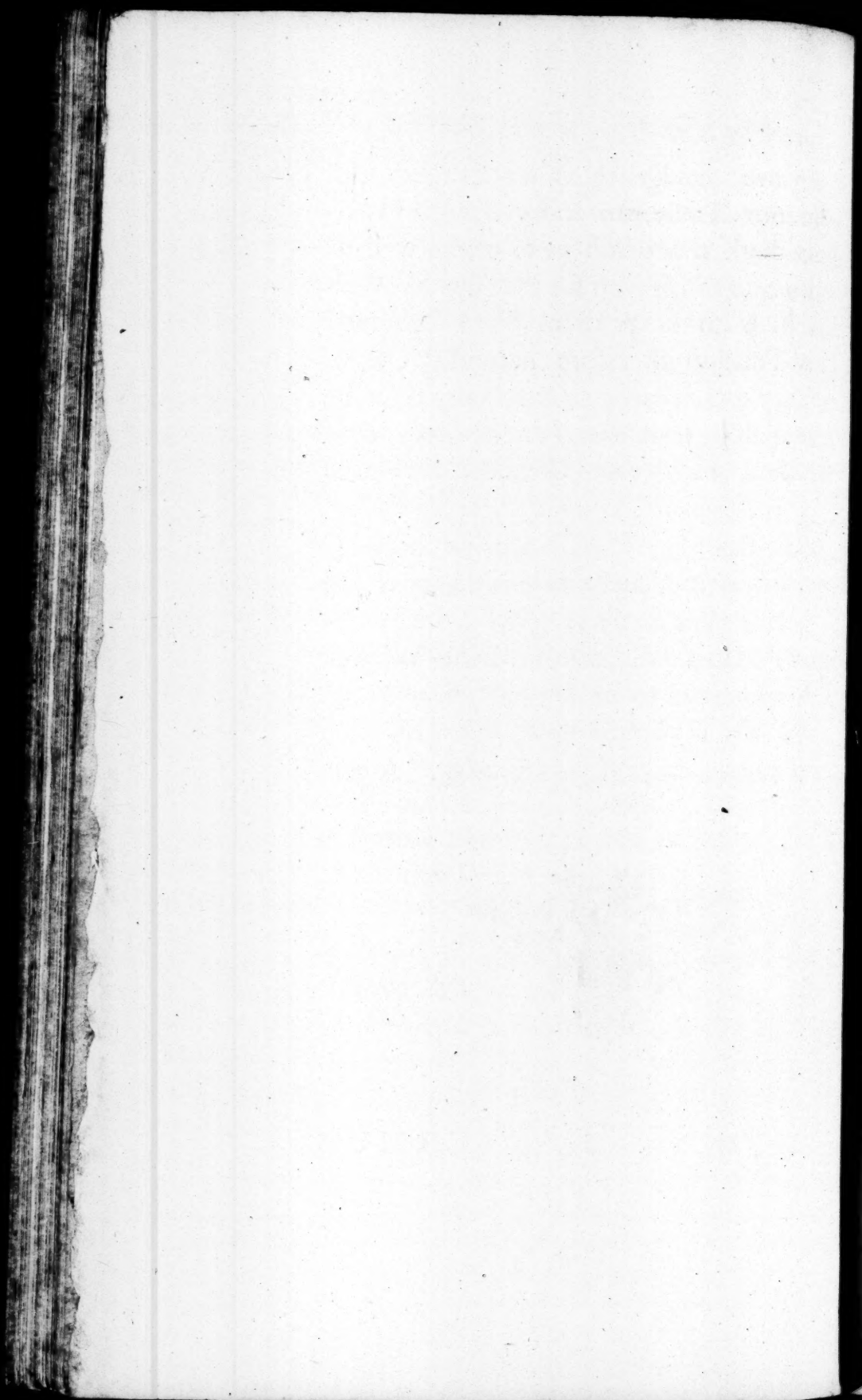
256 *Give us this Day our daily Bread.*

S E R M. these Deficiencies should be made up out
 X. of the Abundance of those, whom he hath
 entrusted with a greater Number of his
 Talents, and expects to find faithful Stew-
 ards in the Distribution of them. And
 whosoever shuts up his Bowels towards
 the Poor, and with-holds that Portion of
 Meat from them in its proper Season,
 that God vouchsafes to convey to them
 through his Hands, that Man plainly
 thwarts the Designs of Providence, he is
 unfaithful, and ungrateful to his Lord,
 and unworthy not only of God's more li-
 beral Favours, but even of his daily Pre-
 servation. We should never therefore pre-
 sume so much, as to pray for *our daily*
Bread, without opening our Hearts to-
 wards those that are in Want, and think-
 ing them entitled to a Share with us, at
 least to the Fragments that remain after
 we ourselves were filled. For with what
 Confidence can we call God *our Father*,
 when we cast off all Regard to our indi-
 gent Brethren, who are equally God's
 Children with ourselves? How can we
 expect God's Blessing upon *our daily Bread*,
 of which we have enough, and to spare,
 when

Give us this Day our daily Bread. 257

when we grudge the Crumbs that fall SERM.
from our Table, to those whom Provi- X.
dence hath made Suitors to us, as well as
Petitioners to Heaven for that slender Mor-
sel that is to keep them from Starving?
This Petition therefore naturally excites
our Pity and Charity to the Poor, to make
it available; that our *Prayers and Alms*,
like those of devout *Cornelius*, may come
up as a *Memorial before God*, representing,
that in this very Confidence we pray for
our daily Bread, and desire it no otherwise
than as we are ready to give to every one
their Portion, whom the divine Wisdom
hath appointed to be fed out of our Store.
And blessed is that Servant, whom the Lord
when he cometh, shall find so doing. Amen.

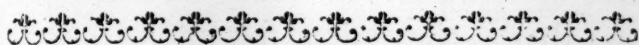






S E R M O N XI.

And forgive us our Debts, as we
forgive our Debtors.



MATTH. vi. 12.

*And forgive us our Debts, as we
forgive our Debtors.*



THE foregoing Petition con- S E R M.
cerns the Things necessary XI.
for Life, (both animal and
spiritual) the Supplies of
which we are taught hum-
bly to beg, and only to expect, from the
Stores of God's Bounty, and the Riches of
his Grace.

S 2

BUT

SERM.

XI.

partly through the Corruption of our Nature, and the unavoidable Infirmities of the Flesh, and partly through our wilful Folly, and Resistance to God's Holy Spirit; and since by Reason of such our Offences we are become Debtors to God's Justice, and liable to his Vengeance; I say, in this Regard, as we are frail and sinful Men, we have as much Need, and therefore as much Reason constantly to implore God's free Grace in the Pardon of our Sins, as we have to pray for *our daily Bread*, or the *Food* that is convenient for us.

THAT therefore Life may be a real Blessing to us, and that we may be able to taste the solid Comforts of it, without the Annoyance of those anxious Fears, and Terrors of Mind, which are the inseparable Companions of Guilt, we are embolden'd to pray in the Petition now before us, *Forgive us our Debts, as we forgive our Debtors.*

IN speaking to which Words, I shall (as formerly)

I. *First,*

As we forgive our Debtors.

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SERM.

XI.

I. *First*, ENDEAVOUR to inform you of the true Meaning, and Import of the Petition.

II. *Secondly*, To shew you with what Dispositions, and Affections it ought to be presented by the Petitioner.

I. Now in order to arrive at the true, and full Meaning of the Petition, you must have the Patience to follow me through these several Enquiries; as

First, WHAT the Nature of the Debts is, which are here specified.

Secondly, (WHICH is also consequent upon the former) wherein the Forgiveness of those Debts consists.

Thirdly, BY what Means that Forgiveness is to be obtain'd.

Fourthly, UPON what Condition it is to be desired or expected.

AND *First*, As for the Nature of the Debts here specified, let St. *Luke* be the Interpreter, and we shall find that these Debts are Sins. For *he* words the Petition thus: *Forgive us our Sins; for we also for-* Luke xi.
give every one that is indebted to us. These⁴

SERM. our *Debts* therefore, 'tis plain, are our Sins.

XI. And Sin, as the Apostle defines it, is the
 1 Ep. Jo. *Transgression of the Law*, that righteous
 3, 4 Law of God reveal'd unto us in his Gospel.

Now this Law consists of two Parts; the *directive Part*, which is the Rule of our Actions, commanding us such Things as we ought to do, and forbidding us what we ought *not* to do: And the *remunerative Part*, which is, as it were, a Fence to the Body of the Law itself; urging, and enforcing the Observance of it, and securing it (all that is possible) from Violation and Contempt; by annexing such Promises, and Threats as are sufficient to influence our Hopes and Fears.

To the *directive Part* we are all naturally Debtors, as being the Liege-Subjects and Servants of God, and to whom therefore, as supreme Legislator and Governour, we owe the most entire Submission and Obedience; and in Consideration of this, though our bounden Duty and Service, God has made himself mutually a Debter to us by the free Promise of an unmerited Reward.

As we forgive our Debtors.

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BUT on the other Hand, upon Default S E R M.
of such our Obedience, we become Debtors XI.
to the *vindictive Justice* of God, which
without some valuable Compensation made
to his injur'd *Honour*, must of Necessity
take place against us; and consequently,
so long as our Guilt remains upon us, we
are bound over, as it were, to the Judge-
ment Seat of *Christ*, where such Punish-
ment will be awarded to us, as shall be
proportionate to our Deserts.

IN short; our Subjection to the Law of
God implies a *double Obligation*. The
First is to *Obedience*; which when once
infring'd, the *Second* is to Punishment, and
that without an equivalent Satisfaction,
must needs abide. And it abides upon us
all, forasmuch as all have sinned; and, as
Sinners, we have nothing either for Price
or Purity, worthy to offer as an Atone-
ment unto God; and consequently nothing
to screen us from his Displeasure; nothing
on our Part (were there no better Provi-
sion for us) to hinder the Execution of
that Punishment, which is the just Deme-
rit of our Sins.

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AND for this Reason it is, that our Sins whose inherent Guilt renders us justly liable to God's righteous Judgment, are here styl'd our *Debts*, viz. *Debts* of Punishment contracted by the Commission of such Sins.

BUT though we are thus Debtors with Respect to God, yet it will not become *us* to bring *God* upon the Level with every private Creditor in the Concern of Money, that is owing betwixt Man and Man.

FOR a Similitude ought not to be overstrain'd, but to be apply'd only, as it happens to fit, without stretching or forcing. And in the present Case, as a Creditor has a right to demand, and legally to possess himself of that Money, which is his just, and lawful Debt: So, and much more has God a sovereign Right, to take Vengeance of Sinners, as the Punishment of Sin is a Debt due to his eternal Justice, and determin'd so to be by the wise, and equal Laws of his Government.

THUS far therefore the Resemblance holds, and farther it needs not, nor is there any Reason it should. For, as God, in this Particular seems to stand in the
Relation

Relation of a Creditor to us, so is he in SERM.
all Respects our supreme Lord, and only XI.
Ruler. And it may possibly be free for
a Creditor to do that, which would be ut-
terly inconsistent with the Character of a
wife, *a holy, and just Governour* as God is.

FOR instance; a Creditor may, 'tis like,
remit a Sum of Money that is owing to
him, without insisting upon any Payment,
either in whole, or in part, from the Prin-
cipal or Surety. And shall we therefore
conclude, that it would equally beseem
the Governour of the World absolutely to
forgive the whole Debt of Punishment to
us his sinful Creatures, without any sort of
Satisfaction made to his Justice, either by
ourselves, or any Surety in our Stead.
I should be afraid to make the rash Con-
clusion, because that Sin, for which such
Punishment is justly due, implies no less
than a direct Contrariety to the Holiness
of his Nature, a flat Contradiction to the
Wisdom of his Laws, and an open Con-
tempt of his Authority. For which Rea-
son, so far at least as we are able to judge,
it should seem not so well to consist either
with God's Honour, or the Ends of Go-
vernment

S E R M. vernment to suffer Sin to go altogether
 XI. unpunish'd. And, if I mistake not, the
 Scripture inclines us so to think, because
 in the Propitiation for Sin there set forth,
 although the Guilt of it be perfectly ex-
 piated, yet the Punishment is nevertheless
 transferr'd upon that most holy, and inno-
 cent Person, the *only Mediator between God
 and Man, the Man Christ Jesus*. How-
 ever it be, 'tis certainly an unwarrantable
 Presumption for any Man to say positively,
 that God might, if he had so pleas'd, have
 pardon'd our Sins without requiring any
 Satisfaction, or Reparation to his own Ho-
 nour. 'Tis an unwarrantable Presumption,
 I say, because the Scripture is not for it,
 and Reason almost determines against it.

FOR though God is infinitely merciful,
 yet he must be allow'd to be equally wise,
 and just, and holy. And though it is not
 for us to set Bounds to any of his Per-
 fections; yet we may be assur'd, that there
 is an exact Consent, and Harmony among
 them all; and that all his Dealings, and
 Proceedings with Mankind, are always
 consonant thereunto. And therefore, for
 any Man to pretend to exalt his Mercy,
 in

in Derogation to his Justice, or Holiness, SERM. XI.
or any other of his Attributes, is in Effect
to lessen, and vilify them all, that is indeed
not to magnify his holy Name, but to blas-
pheme it.

I HAVE been the longer upon this Head
to prevent Mistakes; and I hope also by
this Time, that it fully appears what the
Nature of the Debts here specified is. For
the Nature of our Debts, that is of our
Sins (here so call'd) is such, that there is
a Necessity, it should seem, that Satisfa-
ction be some Way or other made to the
divine Justice; and yet the Sinners (which
is the Mystery of this wonderful Contrivance)
are also some Way or other made
capable of Forgiveness: For they are au-
thoriz'd to pray, as in this Petition, *For-
give us our Sins.*

HASTEN we now to the *Second* Enqui-
ry, *viz.*

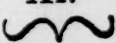
Secondly, WHEREIN the *Forgiveness* of
such our *Debts*, or *Sins* does consist. And
this, depending in a good Measure upon
what has been already laid down, will be
so much the easier to be resolv'd. For
such as is the Nature of our *Debts*, such
must

SER M. must the *Forgiveness* be; that is to say, it
 XI. must be of equal Extent to the Obligation
 of those Debts, and sufficient to discharge
 us from them. And therefore, as the
 Debts of Sin include an Obligation to Pun-
 ishment, as being justly due upon the
 Commission of Sin, and the Guilt thereby
 contracted: So the Remission of Sin must
 imply an Absolution from that Guilt, and
 a Release from that Punishment. And
 since the Punishment of Sin is a Debt
 due to the divine Justice, the Release of
 such Punishment, must, though an Act of
 Mercy, be also consistent with Justice.
 And therefore, seeing the essential Recti-
 tude, and Holiness of God is such, that
 he can hardly be suppos'd to dispense Par-
 don whilst his Justice remains unsatisfied,
 some such Satisfaction must make Way for
 the Forgiveness of these Debts, as may
 at once demonstrate God's Righteousness in
 the Detestation of Sin, and set forth his
 free Grace, and Mercy in pardoning the
 Sinner. So that according to this Account
 of the Matter, the Forgiveness of Sins con-
 sists in a gracious, and yet righteous Act of
 God, absolving the Sinner from his Guilt,

and freeing him from the Punishment due thereunto; and this, in Consideration of some competent Satisfaction some Way or other made unto him. And this, I say, is both a gracious, and a righteous Act of God; for 'tis of his meer Grace, that he accepts of any Satisfaction, but 'tis of just Right that he requires it.

AND this Account, as I humbly conceive, is agreeable both to Reason and Scripture. For that a merciful God, even when offended by his unworthy Creatures, should be willing to be appeas'd and satisfied, is the Voice of Reason. And that a just God should not be too easy to forgive without being some Way appeas'd, and satisfied, seems to be likewise the Voice of Reason. But how his incensed Justice, and his relenting Mercy should be brought to concur in the same Act of Forgiveness, is beyond the Discovery of unassisted Reason.

HERE therefore Revelation steps in seasonably, and gives us a clearer Knowledge of this Salvation, by the Remission of Sins. And this Knowledge, as it is propos'd to us in Scripture, does also well deserve our rational

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S E R M. rational Assent. For, as says St. Paul, *This*
 XI. *is a faithful Saying, and worthy of all Ac-*
 i Tim. i. *ception, that Christ Jesus came into the*
 15. *World to save Sinners.* For the better Under-
 standing of which merciful Dispensa-
 tion, proceed we now to the *Third*, and
 that a very important Enquiry, *viz.*

Thirdly, By what Means this Forgiveness is obtained for us; and that is by the meritorious Death, and Passion of the *Man Christ Jesus*, who is also God incarnate.

SUCH is the Character of the Person, who undertook to procure our Pardon, (by which also he appears to be eminently qualified for the undertaking) and such the Means of accomplishing it.

THAT his Character is that of God and Man united in one Person, the Scripture sufficiently bears Witness; for the incommunicable Titles, and Attributes, and Works of God are there ascrib'd unto him; and therefore he is perfect God: And in the History of his Life and Death, we find him in his natural Actions and Passions, and in all other Points like unto us, *Sin only excepted*; and therefore he is perfect Man.

AND

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AND that his divine, and humane Na-^{SERM.}
ture were united in one Person is also ^{XI.}
plain; for St. *John* acquaints us, that the ^{John i. 1,}
same eternal *Word* which was in the begin-^{&c.}
ning, and was with God, and was God, was
also made *Flesh*, and dwelt among us: And
St. *Paul* tells us, that God was manifest in ^{1 Tim. iii.}
the *Flesh*, and that the *Fulness* of the God-^{16.}
head dwelt bodily in that sacred Person, in ^{Col. ii. 9.}
whom this mysterious Union was found.

AND 'tis in Virtue of this wonderful U-
nion, that he is qualified to be the alone
Mediatour betwixt God and Man, as Par-
taker of the Nature of both.

FOR as Man, he was, by Reason of that
common Alliance that is between all Men,
a proper Surety for Mankind: As a Man
perfectly innocent, he was the more pow-
erful Advocate in behalf of the Guilty:
As a mortal Man he was capable of suf-
fering, and laying down his Life, accord-
ing to the determinate Counsel, and Fore-
knowledge of God.

ON the other Hand, being God as well
as Man, he was enabled to undergo his bit-
ter Agony and cruel Death, and, during
that bloody Conflict, to bear his Father's
hottest

SERM. hottest Displeasure, and the Burden of the
 XI. Sins of a whole World, which to meer
 Humanity would have been utterly insupportable.

Acts xx.
 28.

AND it is from his Divinity, that such his Sufferings deriv'd all their mighty Value, and their Virtue; 'tis this alone that made his Blood so precious, and available in the Sight of God, because as the Scripture warrants us to speak; it was no other than his *own Blood*, even the Blood of God.

WELL therefore may the Forgiveness of Sins, be attributed (as every where it is) to the sole Merit, and Efficacy of the Death and Passion of our *Saviour Christ*. For in the Respect afore-mention'd, it must needs be a valuable Price for the Redemption of Sinners, and a sufficient Expiation, and full Satisfaction for the Guilt, and Punishment of all their Sins.

THE Testimonies of Scripture are very numerous, and pregnant to this Purpose;
 II. liii. 5. such is that of the Prophet *Isaiab*, *he was wounded for our Transgressions, he was bruised for our Iniquities*. Such are those many Passages of the *New Testament*, where

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where it is expreſſy ſaid, *that Chriſt ſuf-fer'd once for Sins, the Juſt for the Unjuſt:* S E R M.
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That he gave himſelf for our Sins; that he was deliver'd for our Offences; that he died for our Sins, and the like; in all which Expreſſions the impuſive, and meritorious Cause of *Chriſt's* Death, is as plainly ſet forth, as Words can well do it. I Pet. iii.
18.

CORRESPONDENT to theſe are thoſe other Places, where it is ſaid, *that Chriſt appeared to put away Sin by the Sacrifice of himſelf, that he gave his Life a Ranſome for many, that his Blood was ſhed for the Remiſſion of Sins, and he himſelf bare our Sins in his own Body on the Tree;* from all which it appears, that the Deſign of *Chriſt* was to approve himſelf what his Name imports, a Saviour to the World, to expiate our Sins, which he did by his Sacrifice, and to reſcue us from the Punishment, which he did by paying down the Price of his own Life, and voluntarily ſubſtituting himſelf to ſuffer in our Stead. And that this Oblation, and this Purchase, were of great Avail in our behalf, we are comfortably aſſur'd; for *by his Stripes* it is ſaid, *that we are healed; in his Blood we are ju-*

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ſtified;

SERM. *justified; justified from all Things, from which*
 XI. *we could not be justified by the Law of Mo-*
ses, and in one Word, that in him we have
Redemption through his Blood, even the For-
giveness of Sins.

Rom. iii.
 23, &c.

I AM forc'd to crowd as many of these Passages, as I can, into a little Room to avoid being tedious. But the whole Transaction, whereby the Remission of Sins is obtain'd; and every Thing relating thereunto, is set before us in one View, in those admirable Words of St. Paul; *for all have sinned, and come short of the Glory of God, being justified freely by his Grace, through the Redemption that is in Jesus Christ. Whom God hath set forth to be a Propitiation through Faith in his Blood, to declare his Righteousness for the Remission of Sins, that are past through the Forbearance of God.*

THESE Words are of wonderful Weight, and do plainly point out all the Causes and Grounds, the Means, and Ends of that Remission which *Christ* purchas'd for us. And *First* in the very Entrance we meet with the efficient Cause, which is God's free Mercy, for we are justified *freely by his Grace:*

Free

Free it was to the Sinner, though the Sa-
viour paid for't. Next we have the pro-
curing Cause, which is the Ransom paid,
and the Oblation offer'd. For we are ju-
stified thro' the Redemption that is in Jesus
Christ, whom God hath set forth to be a
Propitiation. Then we are directed to the
final Cause, which is two-fold, first in re-
spect of God, to declare his Righteousness,
that is to demonstrate his exemplary Justice
in requiring Satisfaction for Sin, even when
he design'd to forgive the Sinner, and that,
as the Apostle elsewhere says, by making
him to be Sin, who knew no Sin, i. e. by
making the Death of an innocent Person,
(willingly submitted to) the Example of
what Sin really deserves, that so the actual
Sinner might be more sensibly convinc'd,
how hateful his Sins are in God's Eyes.
The *Second* End respects Men, which is
their Release from Punishment, and De-
liverance from the Wrath to come, for
that is implied in the Forgiveness of Sins.
Lastly, we have here also the Condition
upon which the Purchase of our Saviour's
Blood is effectually applied, and made o-
ver to us, and that is through Faith in the

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S E R M. same: For, as it follows, *God is the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.*

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Rom. iii.  
26.

AND now I shall detain you no longer upon this Head, having, I hope, said what may be sufficient to help you to conceive, by what Means the Forgiveness of Sins is obtain'd, namely by the meritorious Death and Passion of *the Man Christ Jesus, God manifest in the Flesh.*

'Tis beside my Purpose, and not within my Time, to answer the Objections, and Cavils that vain Men are apt to raise against the Possibility of the hypostatical Union; the Justice of punishing the Innocent for the Guilty; the Validity of the Satisfaction suppos'd to be made by the Death of *Christ*, which was temporal, in lieu of that, which Sinners were to suffer, which was eternal, or any other of the like Nature.

NOR shall I go about to vindicate those Texts of Scripture I have any where refer'd to, from all the strange Glosses, and unnatural Interpretations, which have been forc'd upon them by the subtle, and contentious: I have neither Leisure, nor Mind for such Employment at present. For as

it is the Apostle's Advice, *that we should* SERM.  
*pray lifting up holy Hands, without Wrath* XI.  
*or Doubting*; so I should almost make it a <sup>1</sup> Tim. ii.  
Scruple to afford Room for Dispute in a <sup>8.</sup>  
Discourse that has Part of the Lord's Prayer for its Subject.

INSTEAD therefore of having to do with such unreasonable Men, as take Pains to argue themselves out of their *Christian* Belief, and desperately stake their Souls upon the Nicety of a Criticism; let us rather make a Stand here, and reflect a little with Wonder and Gratitude, upon the stupendous Work of our Redemption. And, *First* behold! the divine *Philanthropy* and Compassion, commiserating with all the Tenderneſs of a Father, the undone Estate of his rebellious Children! Then see! his infinite Wiſdom fore-ordaining, designing, contriving, ripening and accompliſhing all thoſe ſtrange Events, which were to make Way for their Reſcue and Deliverance. And, next in the Fulneſs of Time, behold! ye Believers, and wonder and adore; behold alſo ye Deſpiſers, and wonder, and believe, leſt ye periſh; but behold the amazing Condeſcenſion of the Son of God,

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stooping to take our vile Nature upon him, and cloathing his Divinity with a mysterious Veil of humane Flesh. Consider also his unexampled Love, in laying down his Life, not for his Friends, but for his malicious, and implacable Enemies; and herein contemplate, with Reverence the friendly Contest (if with Reverence, I may say so) so well according between Justice and Mercy; Justice claiming its own, and insisting upon a full Satisfaction for Sin, and Mercy nevertheless carrying off the Spoils, and rejoicing against Judgment, in the Ransome, and Release of Sinners? *O! the Depth of the Riches, both of the Wisdom, and Knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his Judgments, and his Ways past finding out.*

NOT to lose ourselves therefore in these pleasing Contemplations, it will be high Time to pass on to the *fourth* and *last* Thing to be enquir'd into, *viz.*

*Fourthly*, UPON what Condition we are admitted to pray for, and expect the Forgiveness so wonderfully obtained for us.

AND the Condition here express'd is a Readiness to forgive *our Debtors*, i. e. those who

who have any Ways offended, and injured S E R M.  
us. And that this is propos'd as a requi- XI.  
site Condition on our Part, to make our  
Prayers available with God, when we also  
sue for Pardon, is evident from the 14<sup>th</sup>,  
and 15<sup>th</sup> Verses, where it is inculcated up-  
on us in these weighty Words: *For if ye  
forgive Men their Trespases, then your  
heavenly Father will also forgive you. But  
if ye forgive not Men their Trespases, nei-  
ther will your Father forgive your Trespas-  
ses.* Where such Strefs is laid upon it,  
that it can be no less than a Qualification  
necessarily requir'd, with which, if we  
come unto God, we are encourag'd to hope  
for Forgiveness ourselves; but without it,  
we must not, we cannot. Since therefore  
this is most certainly a Condition requir'd  
indispensably of us, it will be of great Use  
to understand it aright, lest we should  
think ourselves duly qualified when we are  
not. And in order to this,

*First*, LET it be observ'd, that this Con-  
dition, though singly here propos'd, is not  
to be understood absolutely, and exclusively  
of all others. For the two great Gospel-  
Conditions of Faith and Repentance, are



SERM. always presuppos'd as necessary to qualify  
 XI. us for any of the Privileges tendred to us  
 in that Gospel. And even this particular  
 Condition, is indeed contain'd in that more  
 general one of Repentance, which implies  
 a forsaking of Sin, and a Disposition to the  
 Practice of all Virtue; and among *Chri-*  
*stian* Virtues the Forgiveness of Injuries is  
 one of the most eminent. And therefore,  
 when it is said, *if ye forgive Men, &c.* it  
 must in all Reason be construed with a  
*Proviso*, that no other Requisite be want-  
 ing.

*Secondly*, It may be observ'd, that this  
 among all the rest is singled out, and made  
 the exprefs Condition of obtaining Pardon  
 at the Hand of God; because 'tis a sure  
 Trial of our Ingenuity and Sincerity. For  
 he that loveth his Brother for God's Sake,  
 does thereby testify his Love towards God,  
 and as St. *Jahn* speaks; *If a Man loveth*  
*not his Brother whom he hath seen, how shall*  
*he love God whom he hath not seen?* That  
 is, if he wilfully omits what is easiest to  
 Flesh and Blood, how can it be imagin'd,  
 that he should be ready to do what is  
 much harder? Besides, if a Man cannot find

1 Ep. iv.  
 20.

in

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in his Heart to forgive his offending Brother, at least upon Principles of common Gratitude and Prudence, seeing that he himself stands in much more Need of Forgiveness from the God which he daily provokes; it is not to be supposed, that such a Man should be very conscientious in the other Parts of his Duty, where he has no such immediate Motive to stir him up to the Practice. He therefore that is defective in this Point, may well be presum'd to be so in others too; but to be sure he wants that Charity, without which all other Pretences are nothing worth. And therefore the Negative is peremptory. *But if ye forgive not Men their Trespases, neither will your Father forgive your Trespases.*

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*Thirdly,* It is to be observ'd, that tho' Forgiveness of Injuries is here required of us, in which we should do well, to make the Mercy of God our Pattern, so far as we are able to imitate it; yet we must not propose all the same Measures to ourselves in forgiving, or not forgiving, as God does.

For Allowance must in Modesty be made, for the infinite Distance between God and his

SER M. his Creatures; and we must not pretend  
 XI. to do in this Case all that he may or can  
 do. For he forgives as a supreme Rector,  
 and Governour: We as fellow Creatures,  
 and fellow Servants: He, as the most  
 holy God; we as sinful Dust and Ashes:  
 He as exercising his sovereign Prerogative,  
 we as doing our Duty in Obedience to his  
 Commands. We must not think there-  
 fore in this Respect, that our Ways ought  
 to be altogether like his Ways.

FOR instance; God, though he tenders  
 Forgiveness to all, yet he never actually  
 forgives the Impenitent, because his Ho-  
 linefs, and Purity is fuch, that he cannot  
 take a Sinner into his Favour, that wil-  
 fully continues fo. But this is no Warrant  
 for us to go and do likewise; because we  
 are neither fo pure, nor fo perfect in our  
 felves, nor fo blameless, and harmless to-  
 wards our Neighbours; but that we may  
 bear with an injurious Brother, and all his  
 Faults, and forbear him; nay, and forgive  
 him too, even while he persists in his Ma-  
 lice, especially fince 'tis the Will of God,  
 that we should *thus overcome Evil with*  
*Good.*

AGAIN;

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AGAIN; it well beseems the Wisdom, SERM.  
and Justice of a sovereign Ruler, as God XI.  
is, to require a Compensation to his in-  
jur'd Honour, before he dispenses his Par-  
don to the Sinner. But this does not au-  
thorise us, who are all fellow Subjects, to  
do the like in the Cases of private Injuries.  
No! we are commanded *when we are*  
*smitten on the right Cheek, to turn the o-*  
*ther also; and when our Coat is wrongfully*  
*taken away, to part with our Cloak also;*  
*i. e.* to submit to all lesser, and lighter In-  
juries not only without Reparation, but e-  
ven with some Inconvenience to ourselves,  
rather than to retaliate, or revenge them.  
'Tis true when the Injuries offer'd grow in-  
supportable, and strike at our very Life, or  
Livelihood, or good Name, then there is  
Liberty for an Appeal to the Magistrate,  
which is in Truth an Appeal to God; for  
the Magistrate is the Minister of God to  
execute his Vengeance in Cases of this Na-  
ture. But then we must do this only in  
our own Defence and Vindication, and  
not suffer our Passion, or mere Desire of  
Revenge to be any Solicitor, or Party in  
this (otherwise lawful) Prosecution.

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IN short, if we would punctually fulfil the Condition here required of us, we must make our Charity, and Forgiveness as extensive as possible, and forgive our Brethren their Trespases as readily and heartily, as much, and as often as ever we have Opportunity, and that in the hardest Cases that can reasonably be put, or tolerably born; and the Reason is, because 'tis dangerous for a Man to be his own Casuist in these Matters, lest he should incline too much towards corrupt Nature, and by setting too narrow Bounds to himself, and curtailing his own Duty, he should also stint God's free Grace, and fall short of that Forgiveness, without which he must perish everlastingly.

AND now I have said all that I have Room for, towards the Resolution of the Queries at first propos'd. And from what has been said, it appears, that our *Debts* (*i. e.* our Sins here so call'd) do imply an Obligation to Punishment, as being due upon the Commission of Sin, and the Guilt thereby contracted: *Secondly*, that the *Forgiveness* of these *Debts* consists in an Absolution from the Guilt of Sin, and a Discharge

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charge from the Punishment annex'd there-  
unto, in Consideration of some competent  
Satisfaction made to the Holiness, the Justice,  
and Honour of God: *Thirdly*, that this Sa-  
tisfaction was effectually made, and conse-  
quently this Forgiveness purchas'd for us,  
by the meritorious Death, and Passion of  
the Son of God, *God manifested in the  
Flesh*; and *Lastly*, that the Condition up-  
on which we are permitted to ask, and  
expect this Forgiveness at God's Hand, is  
(besides the general Qualifications) a spe-  
cial Disposition, and Intention to *be mer-  
ciful as he is merciful, and to forgive, as  
we hope to be forgiven.*

AND agreeable hereunto, the Meaning  
of this Petition is plainly this; *viz.* we do  
most humbly implore God's free Grace in  
the Pardon of our Sins, through the Re-  
demption that is in *Christ*; *who appear'd  
once in the last Days, to put away Sin by  
the Sacrifice of himself*: And we do also  
testify our chearful Compliance with such  
Conditions, as the Gospel requires of us;  
particularly that most equitable, and easy  
one, of *forbearing, and forgiving one ano-  
ther, even as God for Christ's Sake hath  
forgiven*

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SERM. *forgiven us*; and, we trust, will finally  
 XI. *forgive us.* This therefore is what we  
 constantly profess from the very Bottom  
 of our Hearts, without any Manner of  
 Reserve to private Grudge or Revenge,  
 under any Provocation whatsoever, in Re-  
 gard that we, even when Enemies, were  
 reconciled unto God by the Death of his  
 Son, and that the Benefits of that his Pas-  
 sion are to be had upon no other Terms  
 but these.

*Secondly*, I should now proceed to put  
 you in Mind of those good Affections, and  
 Dispositions with which this Petition ought  
 always to be accompany'd, and which  
 seem almost naturally to spring up in a  
 Mind, that is truly instructed in it, and  
 suitably affected with it.

AND *First*, this Petition ought to be  
 presented with the deepest Humility, and  
 Abjection of Soul. For 'tis fit the Crimi-  
 nal should humble himself before his Judge,  
 especially when he is suing out his Par-  
 don. And Criminals we are *all*, even the  
 very best of us in God's purer Eyes: And  
 'tis a fatal Delusion to think otherwise:

1 J. i. 8. *For if we say that we have no Sin, we de-  
 ceive*

*ceive ourselves, and the Truth is not in us;* SERM.  
nay more, we make God a Liar, and his XI.  
Word is not in us. For we can neither  
say, nor think so without contradicting the  
express Declarations of Scripture, as well  
as our own inward Sense and Experience:  
Whereas on the other Hand, *if we confess  
our Sins, he is faithful, and just to forgive  
us our Sins, and to cleanse us from all Un-  
righteousness.* And therefore we ought to  
be sure to make Humility the chief In-  
gredient, as in all our Devotions, so parti-  
cularly in this Petition, lest by pretending  
(with the *Pharisee*) to that Perfection  
which we cannot have, we should forfeit  
that Pardon, which we might otherwise  
obtain.

*Secondly,* THIS Petition ought to be of-  
fer'd up with a lively Faith, and firm  
Trust in the Merits, and Mediation of  
*Christ*. For this is a general Condition,  
without which we are not entitled to any  
of the Benefits, or Blessings of the Gospel.  
And, when we pray in particular for the  
Remission of Sins, we are then more  
especially oblig'd to keep our Faith alive,  
by a vigorous Exercise of it, because other-  
wise



SERM. wise our very Prayers will be without

XI. Heart or Life, for want of that which is  
 the only Ground of a comfortable Assurance.

*Thirdly*, THIS Petition ought likewise to be accompany'd with a stedfast Resolution of Repentance and Amendment. For this also is a requisite Condition, in order to obtain Forgiveness. And it is not indeed to be imagin'd, that God is a Being so very easy, or the Forgiveness of Sins a Mercy so very cheap, that even the Impenitent may be allow'd to ask for or expect. So far from that, that 'tis the most unpardonable Insolence (for a Sinner with a lewd piece of Formality) to presume to beg God's Pardon for his Sins, when he has not truly repented of them, nor can not find in his Heart to leave them.

*Fourthly*, THIS Petition ought principally to be recommended by that most eminent Degree of Christian Charity, which consists in the Forgiveness of Injuries. For this is made above all others the express Condition of the Petition, and 'tis what we are strictly oblig'd to upon several Accounts.

*First*

*First*, UPON the Score of common Reason and Equity; for as the wise Son of Syrach justly expostulates: *One Man beareth Hatred to another, and doth he seek Pardon of the Lord? He sheweth no Mercy to a Man that is like himself, and doth he ask Forgiveness of his own Sins?* No, no! 'tis a most unreasonable Thing to expect that from his God, which he is so unjust, and cruel as to deny his Brother. And therefore the Sinner ought to proceed equally and impartially, in order to obtain his own Suit, and *forgive* his Neighbour the Hurt that he hath done him; and so shall his Sins also be forgiven when he prayeth.

AND *this* we are also oblig'd to in point of Gratitude; for 'tis the least Return we can make to our gracious God for his abundant Mercy towards us; and 'tis the Disingenuity of the contrary Practice, that is one great Aggravation of it. This is plainly intimated in that just Reprimand that is given in the Parable, to that cruel Wretch who had been so kindly treated by his Lord, *O thou wicked Servant! I forgave thee all that Debt, because thou desiredst me; shouldst not thou also have had Com-*

SERM.

XI.

Ecclef.

xxviii. 3.

&c.

Matth.

xviii. 32,

33.

SERM. *passion on thy fellow Servant, even as I had*  
 XI. *Pity on thee?*

AND, if neither Equity will weigh with us, nor Ingenuity work upon us, yet methinks the Sense of our Danger should constrain us (even for our own Sakes) to be merciful to our Brethren. For the Scripture peremptorily declares, *that he shall have Judgment without Mercy, who sheweth no Mercy.* And we find in the Parable, *that the Lord of that wicked Servant was wroth (as well he might) and delivered him over to the Tormenters, 'till he should pay all that was due unto him.* The Application of which is very terrible; *for so likewise (says the meek, and compassionate Jesus) shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your Hearts forgive not every one his Brother their Trespases.*

THIS charitable, this forgiving Temper therefore, is highly reasonable, and every Way well-befits a Christian; nay, 'tis absolutely necessary for him, as he tenders his own Welfare, and hopes to have his Prayer heard, and answer'd to his Comfort.

FOR

FOR he that can take the Confidence to SERM.  
pray, as in this Petition, *Forgive us our* XI.  
*Debts, &c.* and yet at the same Time  
foster Malice, and Mischief in his Heart,  
that Man is in Effect a Petitioner against  
himself; he prays not for Mercy, but for  
Vengeance, and by the Words of his own  
Mouth 'tis fit he should be judg'd.

To conclude therefore, let us endeavour  
so to forgive, that we may not be afraid  
to ask Forgiveness: And let us take care  
so to pray for Forgiveness, that our very  
Prayers may not justify, and encrease our  
Condemnation.

AND, if any Motive be still wanting to  
excite this, or any other of the good Dis-  
positions, and Affections aforementioned,  
let us consider the blessed Season now ap-  
proaching, let us remember the amazing  
Condescension of the Son of God, *in ta-*  
*king upon him the Form of a Servant*, and  
thence learn Humility: Let us reflect  
upon the gracious Intendment of this  
great Mystery, and let that be the Exer-  
cise of our Faith. Let us set before our  
Eyes both the Means, and the Terms of  
our Salvation, and let this quicken us to



SER M. Repentance: And *Lastly*, let us adore the  
 XI. unparallell'd Love of our dear Redeemer,  
 who laid down his Life for his very Enemies, and let this be the Pattern of our Charity; so shall we be fit to bear a Part in that Seraphical Hymn, with which the Prince of Peace, was at first usher'd into the World, *Glory be to God on high, and on Earth Peace, good Will towards Men.* So shall we be worthy Guests at that heavenly Banquet, that Feast of Love, in which we feed upon the spiritual Food of his most precious Body and Blood, that Body which he vouchsafed to wear whilst he dwelt among us, and *that Blood which was shed for many* for the Remission of Sins; for which plenteous Redemption all Honour and Glory, Praise and Thanksgiving be ascrib'd unto the Son of God incarnate, together with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, both now and for ever. *Amen.*

Luke ii.  
 14.



## S E R M O N    X I I .

And lead us not into Temptation,  
but deliver us from Evil.

\*\*\*\*\*

MATTH. vi. 13.

*And lead us not into Temptation,  
but deliver us from Evil.*



HERE is no Doubt, but S E R M.  
that the State of a true Pe- XII.  
nitent carries its own Con-  
solation along with it. For  
the Hope which he has of  
Pardon, through the *Bowels, and Mercies*  
U 3 of

of *Christ*, together with the good Disposition he finds himself in to comply with the easy, and equitable Terms on which it is propos'd, is certainly the most comfortable Ground of Assurance of all others.

BUT yet, though he may, upon this Condition, assure himself of the Forgiveness of Sins past, yet he cannot think, that he is hereby altogether exempt from Sinning for the Time to come. For though he may be acquitted of his Sins, yet from his Frailties, and Infirmities he cannot get free; for the Willingness of the Spirit will always be clogg'd (more or less) with the Weakness of the Flesh. And besides, the Way which he is to walk in, is thick set with Difficulties and Dangers, with Snares, and Pits and Rocks of Offence, with false Lights and false Guides, all or any of which may be the Occasion of his Backsliding.

AND therefore the Penitent, even then when he *standeth* most erect through Faith and Hope, ought to take *Heed lest he fall*, and lest his second Fall be worse, and more fatal

*but deliver us from Evil.*

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fatal than the first. And the less Reason he S E R M.  
has to depend on his own Strength, (and XII.  
that God knows is little enough) the more  
Need he has to pray for the gracious Protection, and Deliverance of the God of all Power and Might, which is also according to our Lord's own Direction in the Petition now before us; *And lead us not into Temptation, but deliver us from Evil.*

AND that we may all learn to pray as we are here taught, I shall, (as my Method has all along been.)

I. *First*, ACCOUNT for the true, and just Meaning of the Petition. And

II. *Secondly*, PUT you in Mind of those suitable Affections, and Dispositions of Soul, with which it ought to be accompanied.

Now the better to inform ourselves of the just Meaning of the Petition, it will be useful to consider,

*First*, WHAT is meant by Temptation?

*Secondly*, WHAT by being led into it.

And

*Thirdly*, WHAT that Evil is, from which we pray to be deliver'd.

U 4

FOR



S E R M.

XII.

splitting the Petition into two, since 'tis plain, that the later is pursuant to the former, and immediately consequent upon it. For as in the former, we pray negatively *against* the violent Incurſion, and overbearing Power of Temptation; ſo in the later we pray poſitively for an actual Deliverance from it, and Strength ſufficient to reſiſt, and overcome it.

BUT to proceed. Let us conſider

*First*, WHAT is meant by Temptation.

FOR the Word is variously uſ'd. Sometimes it is taken in a middle, or indifferent Senſe, for a bare Probation or Trial, by any Method that may be proper to diſcover the Temper, Diſpoſition, or Inclinations of Men. Thus God is ſaid to tempt *Abraham*, when he commanded him to offer up his Son *Iſaac*, and made Proof of his Faith at the Expence of natural Affection, and againſt all the Appearance of natural Poſſibility. Thus he tempted the *Iſraelites* by leading them forty Years thro' the *Wilderneſs*, which (as we find it, *Deut. viii. 2.*) was to humble, and to prove them, and to know what was in their Heart, whether they

*but deliver us from Evil.*

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*they would keep his Commandments or no.* SERM.

XII.

NOT that God stood in Need of any Means of Information, *from whom no Secret can be hid*, but because this Experiment by Way of Discipline was most conducive to his own Glory, and most expedient for his People's Good, as tending to exercise, and improve their Faith, and Dependence upon God, and to confirm them in their Obedience.

BUT doubtless, this cannot be that Sort of Temptation, which we are directed to pray against, and that for these evident Reasons;

*First*, BECAUSE 'tis but just, and right that God, who is the Maker, and Judge of the whole Earth, should exert his sovereign Power, in training, and disciplining the Sons of Men, by Variety of Providences, as shall seem best to his godly Wisdom, and in proving, and examining all their Ways; that so he may be justified in all his Determinations concerning them, especially when he proceeds to final Judgment upon them.

*Secondly*, BECAUSE this sort of Temptation, or Trial is really design'd for our Benefit,

298 *And lead us not into Temptation,*

S E R M. Benefit, and has a direct Tendency effectually to promote it; as being the noblest Theatre for virtuous Action, and the fairest Occasion to approve our Sincerity, Courage, and Constancy in the Sight of God, which will also in the End entitle us to the greater Reward.

XII. *ally to promote it; as being the noblest Theatre for virtuous Action, and the fairest Occasion to approve our Sincerity, Courage, and Constancy in the Sight of God, which will also in the End entitle us to the greater Reward.*

AND therefore, in a right Estimate of Things, it ought rather to be *Matter of Joy* to us, as St. James i. 2. persuades us *to account it, when we fall into divers Temptations*; upon which also our Saviour bestows his most emphatical Blessing, *Blessed are ye when Men revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all Manner of Evil against you falsely for my Name Sake*, (which is a Temptation none of the easiest to be born:) *Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your Reward.* But

Matth. v.  
11.

Secondly, THE Word Temptation is also often taken in a bad Sense, for an Occasion administered by some evil Cause, or presented with a wicked Purpose, or at least in its own Nature unhappily fitted to seduce us from our Duty, and betray us into Sin. This is it which St. Paul in 1 Tim. vi. calls a *Temptation and a Snare*;

*but deliver us from Evil.*

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and in this Sense it is that St. James assures us, that *God tempteth no Man*, i. e. he does not, he cannot, either design, or attempt to draw any Man into Sin.

SERM.  
XII.  
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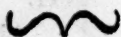
BUT yet Occasions of this Kind will never be wanting, as long as we live in a wicked World, and carry this frail Flesh about us, and have to do with our restless and implacable Adversary the Devil.

FOR the World is made up of an infinite Variety of Objects, which are continually striking upon our Senses and Imaginations, and do vehemently affect our Appetites and Passions. And these all by Reason of our Familiarity with them, and the Impressions they are able to make upon us, are apt, in their Turns, to be so many Temptations to us, either by flattering Hopes alluring, or by false Fears urging us to commit Sin and Folly.

AND, as it is a degenerate World, it abounds with evil Counsellors, and evil Instruments, vain Customs, and pernicious Examples, erroneous Opinions in Favour of Vice, and strange Misprisions to the Prejudice of Virtue; and these also, as Opportunity



S E R M. opportunity offers, are ready to join, and re-  
 XII. inforce the other Temptations.



AND, that which adds still to their Strength, is our own Weakness and Frailty, and the Treachery of a busy Party within us, our corrupt Lusts, which hold private Correspondence with the Enemy, and are always disposed to purchase Liberty and Indulgence for themselves, in Defiance of Reason, in Despight of Grace, and at the Hazard of eternal Damnation.

AND, which makes our Danger yet greater, *Satan* is always at Hand, tendring these, and numberless Temptations besides, that we are not aware of, with unwearied Diligence, persuading us to embrace them with the subtlest Insinuation; and dressing them up with all the Artifice imaginable. But to be sure he fails not to attack us in the weakest Part, whether it be Ambition, Lust, Avarice, Cowardise, Impatience, or Distrust. And to this End he always consults our Temper and Constitution, the Manner, and Circumstances of our Life, the Company we keep, the Commerce we maintain, the  
 Projects

*but deliver us from Evil.*

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Projects we pursue, the good or bad Success we have had, or any Thing else that may give him a Handle, that so by any Means he may get an Advantage over us. SERM.  
XII.

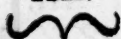
Now all such Temptations as these, that is, all dangerous Solicitations to Sin, we are directed to pray against in this Petition.

BUT we must not persuade ourselves that we are hereby allow'd to pray absolutely, even against all *these* Temptations, because such a Prayer would be absurd, for us to offer, and unfit for God to grant.

*First*, IT would be absurd for us to offer, because indeed it includes an Impossibility in the Condition we now are. For to live in the midst of a World of Temptations, and yet to hope never so much as once to be tempted, were a vain Hope; almost as vain as for a Soldier to expect to be shot-free, when he is surrounded by the Enemy, and fir'd upon on all Sides. And

*Secondly*, WERE it feasible, yet it would not be fit for God to grant us a perfect Freedom, and Exemption from all manner of Temptation. For our *Christian*

SERM. opportunity offers, are ready to join, and re-  
 XII. inforce the other Temptations.



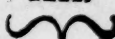
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301

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SERM.  
XII.  


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SERM. State is a State of Probation; and how  
 XII. shall we approve ourselves, unless we be  
 try'd? And *if a Man strive for the Ma-*  
 2 Tim. ii. *stery (says St. Paul) he is not crowned un-*  
 5. *less he strive lawfully.* But sure enough  
 he that strives not at all, can never be wor-  
 thy to be crown'd.

BESIDES, were there no Temptation,  
 there would hardly be any Virtue; for that  
 which makes Virtue what it is, is a volun-  
 tary and rational Choice, for which there  
 would be no Room left, if there were no  
 Temptation in the opposite Scale. And  
 'tis the Difficulty of the Temptation that  
 makes it really of Price, and Value in the  
 Sight of God; because it shews it to be  
 the Effect of that Faith, and that Love,  
*which is able to overcome the World.*

IN a Word, Temptation is that which  
 helps to brighten, and perfect all our Gra-  
 ces here, and will also add Weight, and  
 Lustre to that Crown of Glory, which we  
 shall inherit hereafter. In this therefore  
*we ought greatly to rejoice, (as St. Peter ex-*  
 1 Ep. i. *horts us) though now for a Season (if Need*  
 6, 7. *be) we are in Heaviness through manifold*  
*Temptations; that the Trial of our Faith,*  
*being*

*but deliver us from Evil.*

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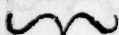
*being much more precious than of Gold that* SERM.  
XII.  
*perisheth, though it be tried in the Fire,*  
*might be found unto Honour, and Praise,*  
*and Glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.*

WE are not therefore to pray against Temptation in general; but only against the violent Onset, the insinuating Subtlety, the mighty Prevalence of such Temptations as we are neither prepar'd to receive, nor enabled to resist. And that this is the Scope, and Aim of the Petition will further appear, if we consider,

*Secondly, WHAT is meant by being led into Temptation.* Now to be led into Temptation is (as *Grotius* observes upon the Place) so to be involv'd in the Danger, or entangled in the Snare, as not to be able to get free again. This the *Hebrews* express sometimes more fully by entring into the Hand of Temptation; *i. e.* being brought under its Power and Tyranny.

AND God is said to *lead*, or bring Men *into Temptation*, not that he is the direct Cause of it; for *let not any Man say, that he is tempted of God*, when 'tis of his own Lusts that he is drawn away and enticed; when 'tis through their Inveiglement, that  
he

S E R M. he is brought to a base, and dastardly Compliance with Sin, and is persuaded to hug, and embrace his own Ruin.

XII.  


BUT yet since there is nothing comes to pass, whether Good or Evil, without God's Permission at least, if not his actual Procurement; and since the ordinary Dispensations of his Providence, and more especially his extraordinary Judgments are sometimes the visible Occasions of Men's thus entering into Temptation; and since his judicial Desertion does also leave them under it helpless, and remediless without any Power to disintangle themselves; therefore, what God suffers, and hinders not, is in some Sense attributed to him.

THUS in 2 *Sam.* xxiv. 1. God is said to *move David, to number the People*, whereas indeed (as we find in the Book of *Chronicles*) *it was Satan that provoked him*, it was the Vanity of his own Heart, and a Confidence in the Arm of Flesh, that induc'd him thereunto, as appears from the Circumstances of the Story, and the Argument that *Joab* us'd to dissuade him from it. *Now the Lord* thy God add unto the People (how many soever they be) an hundred

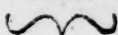
1 Chron.  
xxi. 1.

Ver. 3.

*but deliver us from Evil.*

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hundred Fold; and that the Eyes of my Lord the King may see it.

SERM.  
XII.  


BUT why doth my Lord the King delight in this Thing? Which plainly shews what the real Motive was that tempted him to do so very foolishly. And nevertheless God himself is said to move him thereunto, because the Prosperity with which he had bless'd him, and the Multitude of his Subjects was that which occasionally enkindled, and ministred Fuel to his Pride and Ambition.

THUS again, in the famous Instance of *Pharaoh*, God is said to *harden his Heart*; not that God did any Thing which had a natural, or moral Efficacy to harden him; but that he (like a wilful Wretch as he was) took occasion to confirm himself in his own Obstinacy, even from those mighty Works, and those terrible Judgments, which were enough to soften, and subdue any Heart but his. For when he perceiv'd that the *Magicians* were able apishly to imitate some of those Signs, and Wonders which *Moses* wrought, he began to think himself a Match for the Almighty, and would not yield to his Power; and when



SERM. the divine Judgments were so sore upon  
 XII. him, that he was forc'd sometimes to relent; yet as soon as he saw there was Respite, *he hardened his Heart* again, as presuming that all these Plagues would one Day see an End, and that he should once again be the absolute Master of his Slaves and Bondsmen, notwithstanding all that had been done. And thus was he harden'd, and led by Degrees into that last fatal Temptation, of pursuing *Israel* into the *Red Sea*, where he met with his final Overthrow.

AND though God is said all along to *harden Pharaoh*, yet 'tis plain that the Strength, and Prevalence of the Temptation was owing to his own Pride, Covetousness and Cruelty, which made him grow more obdurate under those amazing Judgments, which one would have thought might have produc'd the quite contrary Effect.

ONCE more; God is said in the 1<sup>st</sup> to the *Romans* to *deliver up the idolatrous Heathens to Uncleanneſs, through the Luſts of their own Hearts, and to give them over to vile Affections, and to a reprobate Mind.*

But

But this does not imply any positive Act <sup>SERM.</sup>  
of God. For he only leaves them to their <sup>XII.</sup>  
own vile Lusts and Affections, which were  
become shamelessly exorbitant and unnatu-  
ral, by Reason of the lewd Practices in  
which their Worship consisted: And to a  
reprobate Mind, in which the Sense of  
common Decency and Modesty, and the  
Notions of Good and Evil were almost  
wholly extinguish'd. And it was but just  
in God to leave them where he found  
them; for as it is inconsistent with his  
Holiness and Purity, actually to tempt or  
incline, much less necessarily to determine  
any Man to Sin; so neither would it be-  
come him to constrain any to be good,  
much less those who have made them-  
selves most abominably wicked. And,  
more especially in those Cases, where not  
only natural Reason, and Conscience is af-  
fronted, but God's Judgments slighted,  
his Mercies abus'd, and his Grace rejected,  
even with Despight, there it is exceeding  
righteous and just, that God should with-  
draw the Assistance of his Holy Spirit, and  
suffer such Men to struggle in vain for a  
while, and at last to sink irrecoverably un-

308      *And lead us not into Temptation,*  
SERM. der the prevailing Power of Temptation,  
XII. not to be avoided, or resisted.

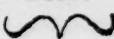
AND thus God may in a qualified Sense be said to *lead us into Temptation*; not by any direct Efficiency, but either by his bare Sufferance, or through the Occasion of such his providential Dispensations as Men wilfully abuse, and turn them to their own Hurt; or *lastly* by his spiritual Dereliction, which is indeed the forest of all Judgments, but that which he never inflicts, 'till his Spirit is griev'd, and provok'd beyond bearing.

AND that we may not be suffer'd thus *to enter into Temptation*, nor by any of these Means be reduc'd, or detain'd under its Power, is the Intendment of this Petition. It remains

*Thirdly*, To be consider'd, what that Evil is from which we pray to be deliver'd. And by this Evil St. *Chrysostome*, and some others do understand the *evil One*, that is *Satan*, who is so distinguish'd; and who as far as his Power extends, is the Author, and Abettour of all Evil, and makes it his whole Business to promote, and propagate it. But 'tis more commonly understood  
of

*but deliver us from Evil.*

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of the Evil of Sin, which is equally the S E R M.  
Effect of his wicked Instigation, and the XII.  
Darling of our own Lusts. 

AND from this homebred Enemy, this fatal Mischief, we are taught to pray that God would protect, and deliver us, in such Way and Manner as he in his fatherly Wisdom shall see most expedient; whether it be by keeping us out of the Way of great Temptations, or by proportioning the Temptations, which he thinks fit to visit us with, to the Measure of our Strength, or else by encreasing our Strength, and lending us his extraordinary Aids, in Proportion to the Greatness, or Violence of the Temptations, with which we are to contend.

THE *First* Method by which we may pray to God to *deliver us from Evil*, is by keeping us out of the Way of great Temptations. For though we must not expect, or desire to be exempt from all Temptation, yet from such as are hazardous, and likely to prove too hard for us, we certainly may. And though as being the Soldiers of *Christ*, we ought not to decline the combate, when the Provi-



SERM. dence of God calls us into the Lifts, yet  
 XII. (with Submission to his Providence) we  
 may avoid it all we can.

Prov. XXX  
 8, &c.

AND to that End 'tis lawful, 'tis prudent to pray, that God would be pleas'd to place us in such Circumstances of Life, as may lie least expos'd to the Assaults and Stratagems of the Enemy. Such was the Prayer of wise *Agur*, *Give me neither Poverty nor Riches: Feed me with Food convenient for me. Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say who is the Lord? Or lest I be poor and steal, and take the Name of my God in vain.* The Reason of which Request is plainly this, that *Agur* thought a middle Estate the safest, as being at a Distance from the Temptations that attend upon either Extreme, *viz.* Ingratitude, and Forgetfulness of God, which is the usual Effect of Plenty and Fullness, and Stealing back'd with Perjury to conceal the Theft, which is frequently the miserable Refuge of pinching Necessity.

*Secondly*, WE may also pray, and very lawfully, that God would be pleas'd to proportion the Temptations with which he thinks good to exercise us, to the Measure

*but deliver us from Evil.*

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sure of our Strength, and our particular SERM.  
Frame and Constitution. XII.

FOR all Men are not of the same Make, some are prepar'd to sustain all the Shocks of Adversity, and remain unmov'd; who in Prosperity soon turn giddy, and are not able to stand: Others again can bear a prosperous Fortune, with Moderation and Evenness enough; who, if the World does but frown, are presently overwhelm'd with Dejection and Despondency. Some are able to endure the Severity of Pain, with a Resolution, and Constancy becoming a *Christian*, whom the soft Blandishments of Pleasure would soon dissolve into Luxury and Effeminacy.

AND others again, can deny themselves in sensual Pleasure, and perhaps despise it too, whom nevertheless the acute Sense of Pain shall make impatient and desperate. 'Tis allowable therefore upon these Considerations, and 'tis indeed the Effect of godly Fear, to beseech God that he would so order Things, and make them work together for our Good, that we may there only be attack'd, where we are best prepar'd

S E R M. par'd, and not where we are incapable of  
 XII. making a resolute Resistance.

*Thirdly*, IF it shall seem good to the divine Wisdom, to prove us with the ruggedest Sort of Temptations, with Trials of *cruel Mockings and Scourgings, of Bonds and Imprisonment, of Torments and Death*; it will behove us to pray, as the Exigence requires, for the extraordinary Succours of Grace, and the *whole Armour of God*; that *we may be able to withstand in the evil Day*; and, when we have done all, *to stand*, and in the mean Time, that we may be fill'd with the sweet Consolations of his blessed Spirit, that we may be encourag'd by that noble Pattern, *which Christ the Author and Finisher of our Faith*, and all those who have been Partakers of his Sufferings *have set before us*; and that the Spirit of Glory may rest upon us also, and transport us with the Prospect of that *far more exceeding, and eternal Weight of Glory*, which shall be our Crown hereafter.

AND now to collect the just Meaning of the Petition, from all that has been hitherto said; it amounts in short to this; *viz.* That in a due Sense of our own Frailty, and  
 a just

*but deliver us from Evil.*

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a just Fear of the many Dangers we are encompass'd with, we flee unto God for his Succour, beseeching him that we may not either in the ordinary Course of his Providence, or in the Severity of his Judgment, be given up into the Hand of Temptation; that it may not prevail over us, nor entangle us, nor violently detain us under its Power.

SERM.  
XII.  


AND to this End we pray for his gracious Protection, Assistance, and Deliverance, that we may not be too much expos'd to great, and dangerous Temptations, or at least that they may bear some kind of Proportion to our Strength and Abilities, or else, if he shall see it most expedient for his own Glory, and our Benefit, to make us fall under the severest Sort of Probation, that the Aids, and Comforts of his Holy Spirit may be answerable to our Needs, and that he who knoweth how to deliver us out of Temptations, would effectually do it, and make us perfect Conquerors through him that loved us.

II. It only now remains, that I briefly remind you of those holy Affections, and  
Dispo-



SERM. Dispositions that ought to accompany this  
 XII. Petition, and I have done. And

THE *First* good Disposition that we ought to bring along with us, when we tender this Petition to *our Heavenly Father* is a conscious Sense of the Weakness, and Imperfection of our present State; and that in Respect both of our natural Abilities, and spiritual Strength. We cannot but be sensible that our Nature is so very much enfeebled by Sin, that we are not of ourselves sufficient for any Thing, and therefore it is that we seek unto God in Prayer both for his Forgiveness and Assistance too. And we must be also sensible, that, though the Decays of Nature are to be repair'd by God's more abundant Grace, yet there is no Perfection on this Side Heaven. A Proneness to Sin there will still be in the very best of Men, and some remains of Corruption in the greatest Saints; and the Examples of their Backslidings are recorded in Scripture, to teach us Caution and Humility. In the Consciousness therefore of those Infirmities, which are at present inseparable from humane Nature, we ought to pray, as here directed,

*but deliver us from Evil.*

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directed, for the divine Aid and Protection. And that

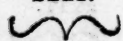
SERM.  
XII.

*Secondly*, WITH a firm Dependance upon the All-sufficiency of God's Grace. For though we are naturally very weak and crazy, yet we may become strong in the Lord; and he is a sure Buckler to all those that put their Trust in him.

WE ought therefore to pray with this Assurance, that the Power of God's Grace may be magnified in us; and if thus we pray, we need not doubt, but all our Wants and Weaknesses shall be abundantly supplied.

FOR it is written for our Comfort, that when St. Paul besought the Lord thrice, <sup>2 Cor. xii.</sup> that the Messenger of Satan might depart <sup>8.</sup> from him, although his Prayer was not answer'd in Kind; yet it was reveal'd to him in Vision, as from the Lord, *My Grace is* <sup>Ver. 9.</sup> *sufficient for thee; for my Strength is made perfect in Weakness.* And though we are not ordinarily to expect Visions, and Revelations in answer to our Prayers; yet if whilst we are encompass'd about with Infirmities, we rely upon God with a holy Confidence, the Power of *Christ* will rest upon

S E R M. upon us also, and the Consolations of his  
 XII. Spirit will flow into our Souls.



*Thirdly*, ANOTHER godly Disposition that ought always to go along with, and further this Petition, is Watchfulness, or Circumspection. *Watch and pray says our blessed Lord, that ye enter not into Temptation.* And our Prayers will go near to be in vain, unless we exercise our utmost Diligence and Vigilance. For though God has promised to *give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him*; yet this supersedes not the Use of ordinary Means: And though our Sufficiency be of him alone, yet a prudent, and provident Care is nevertheless necessary. For Temptation is a subtle, and insinuating Thing that appears under various Shapes, and solicites the Devil's Cause under all Manner of Colours and Disguises; and therefore we ought always to be upon the Guard, lest we should be surpriz'd, and ensnar'd at unawares. Our Reliance therefore upon God should not make us careless of ourselves, lest if we tempt him in expecting to be preserv'd without the due Means, we should at last provoke him to withdraw those very Means,  
 and

*but deliver us from Evil.*

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and leave us expos'd to a wide World of S E R M.  
Temptation, and to that Over-flowing of XII.  
Wickedness, which naturally springs out  
of our own Hearts.

To conclude, let *us commit the keeping  
of our Souls unto God in well doing, as  
unto a faithful Creatour*, and then let us  
pray unto him as our powerful Preserver,  
that he would keep us *from* the Hour of  
Temptation, (if it be his blessed Will) or  
else support us under it, and carry us thro'  
it. *Amen.*



S E R M O N

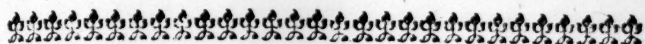






## S E R M O N XIII.

For thine is the Kingdom, the  
Power, and the Glory, for ever  
and ever. Amen.



MATTH. vi. 13.

*For thine is the Kingdom, the Power  
and the Glory, for ever and ever.  
Amen.*



Do not intend to enter far into S E R M.  
that Enquiry started by the XIII.  
Critics, how it should come  
to pass, that these Words,  
subjoin'd to our Lord's Prayer, should be  
inserted

SER M. inserted by St. *Matthew*, and yet omitted  
 XIII. by St. *Luke*; whether it was added to the  
 Text here by some officious Hand, or  
 flipp'd out there by the Transcriber's Neg-  
 ligence: And whether the general Consent  
 of the *Greek* Copies that have it, do not  
 far outweigh the Authority of the *Latin*  
 that want it. I say, I shall not give my  
 self much Trouble to resolve these Que-  
 stions, because I think they may admit of  
 a short Answer; and that is, that 'tis fre-  
 quent enough for one *Evangelist* to shorten  
 that which another has recited more at  
 large.

BUT however it be, I think there is  
 little Reason to suppose it to be an un-  
 scriptural Addition, since it appears to be  
 of the same Original with the rest of the  
 Prayer. For the Men vers'd in *Jewish*  
 Antiquities have trac'd out this *Doxology*,  
 as well as the Petitions that go before it,  
 among the Traditions of the Elders, and  
 their Forms of Prayer. And the whole  
 seems to be compos'd of some certain Pas-  
 sages selected from thence, which our Sa-  
 viour wisely adapted to his own Purpose,  
 and stamp'd with his own Authority.

AND,

AND, upon this Observation there is another grafted by Dr. *Lightfoot*, which he offers as the particular Reason of the Omission in St. *Luke*, and the Insertion in St. *Matthew*. For it seems it was the Custom in the public Service of the Temple, that after the Priest had ended his Prayers, the People were to make their Responses aloud, magnifying God's Kingdom and Power, and saying *Amen* to the whole. But this, in the Recital of their *Phylacteries*, and their private Ejaculations, they were not wont to do. From whence he concludes that what was added by one *Evangelist* was industriously left out by the other, to shew that the Prayer was design'd for general Use, as being equally calculated both for public, and private Occasions.

BUT whether this were in the Intention of the holy Pen-men or no, I cannot but think that the *Doxology* stands in its proper Place, as having a very useful, and necessary Relation to the Nature of Prayer in general, (as well as to this particular Form) and being moreover a special Incitement, and Encouragement to Devotion.



SERM.

XIII.

THIS is what in the Sequel I shall endeavour to make out; and to that End

I. *First*, I shall consider the main Scope of the Words. And

II. *Secondly*, I shall explain, and apply the several Particulars.

I. AND *First*, For the the main Scope of the Words, it appears at first View, that they tend to raise in our Thoughts great, and noble Ideas of God, and his most glorious Perfections; such as are his Sovereignty, his Omnipotence, his Eternity; and, in one Word, all that transcendent Excellency of the divine Nature, which renders him the everlasting Object of all Blessing, and Honour, and Glory; all which we are hereby excited humbly to acknowledge, and openly to profess: And consequently to praise, and bless, and magnify that high, and holy Name which we daily invoke. So that the *Doxology* is only a Mixture of Praise, and Thanksgivings with our Prayers, in order to make them the more acceptable, and available with God. And, for this Reason it is, that I  
suppose

*For thine is the Kingdom, &c.*

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suppose it to be very properly, and profitably subjoin'd in the Place where it is.

S E R M.  
XIII.

BUT this will be more apparent, if we bestow the Pains to compare it, *First*, With the Reason of the Thing itself. *Secondly*, With the Usage, and Expression of Scripture. *Thirdly*, With the Exactness, and Order of this absolute Form of Prayer, in the Close of which it stands.

AND *First*, If we consult the Reason of the Thing itself, the Praise of God, and the thankful Publication thereof must needs be a principal Part of divine Worship, and without all Peradventure, it ought to be the inseparable Companion of Prayer.

FOR, if Prayer be a proper Act of Adoration, and a significant Expression of that inward Reverence, and Esteem which we have for God, so is *Praise*; and that much more directly, and much more emphatically, because it arises more immediately out of a profound Admiration, and particular Estimation of his most adorable Perfections.

AGAIN; if Prayer seems to be the Suggestion of Nature, because all Men are naturally conscious of their Sins and Infirmities

S E R M  
XIII.

mities, and therefore prompted (even without the Help of a Teacher) to seek their Remedy in Prayer; so is Praise, because indeed it is the Director of Prayer, and that which determines it to its proper Object. For the very Reason why we pray unto God for Pardon and Grace, and all Things necessary, or expedient for us, is because we apprehend him to be an all-sufficient, and all-perfect Being, the first almighty, independent, and eternal Cause of all Things, the supreme, and sovereign Good, and the Fountain of all that Good which is any Ways deriv'd to his Creatures. So that the very Notion, which directs us to pray unto him, does first proclaim him to be worthy of all Honour, and Praise in Respect of the supereminent Dignity, and Perfection of his Nature. And indeed, it would be a fatal Mistake in Point of Interest, as well as a gross Misapplication of Duty, to address in Prayer to any Being, but who should appear also to have a just Claim to our devoutest Praises: Because that Being that deserves not the Tribute of Praise, must needs be unworthy of the Homage of Prayer, and incapable

*For thine is the Kingdom, &c.*

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of hearing, or helping those that are so fond as to become his Supplicants.

SERM.  
XIII.

WHICH by the Way, will always be a just Exception to the Practice of the *Church of Rome*, in the Invocation of Saints and Angels.

BUT moreover, if Prayer does imply (as it does when 'tis built upon its true Foundation) a tacite Acknowledgment of all, or most of the divine Attributes, so it is the Business of Praise expressly to assert them, publickly to declare them, and worthily to extol them; chearfully confessing with the Mouth all that Esteem and Veneration, that Love and Joy, that Wonder, and Ravishment which such devout Contemplations are apt to raise in the Heart. And herein it seems to excel Prayer, because that springs first from a Sense of our own Want and Misery, and is spurr'd on by Self-love, and the natural Desire of Happiness: But in this we act upon a more generous Principle, *i. e.* a direct Apprehension of God's unparallel'd Worth and Perfection, and an immediate Concern, and Zeal for his Glory. But without preferring one before the other, we may fairly

Y 3

conclude,



SERM. conclude, that they stand best together,  
 XIII. nay, there seems to be so strict a Con-  
 nexion between them, that we cannot ra-  
 tionally pray unto God at all, but to be  
 sure, we do not pray as we ought, unless  
 we find ourselves dispos'd to praise him as  
 he deserves. And thus from the Reason  
 of the Thing it appears, that Praise is an  
 essential Ingredient in true Devotion, and  
 consequently that the Doxology is plac'd  
 where it should be. And this will be still  
 more evident, if we compare it

*Secondly*, WITH the Usage and Expres-  
 sion of Scripture. For 'tis the constant  
 Usage in those Parts of Scripture, which  
 are properly devotional, to mingle Pray-  
 ers and Praises (as it were) in one Stream,  
 with which, as thus united, the Holy *Psal-*  
*mist's* Pen is constantly over-flowing.

AND 'tis particularly observable in those  
*Psalms*, which conclude with *Amen*, that  
 whatever the Subject Matter be, the Con-  
 clusion is always usher'd in with the Ce-  
 lebration of God's Honour, and the Be-  
 nediction of his Name. Thus in the 41<sup>st</sup>  
*Psalms*, after *David* had complain'd hea-  
 vily of the Malice, and Perfidiousness of  
 his

*For thine is the Kingdom, &c.* 327

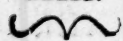
his Enemies, and recommended himself <sup>S E R M.</sup> to the Mercy of God, and his Protection, <sup>XIII.</sup> he concludes with much Chearfulness and Thankfulness. *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting. Amen and Amen.*

THUS again in the 72<sup>d</sup> Psalm, which is <sup>Ver. 18,</sup> a Prayer of David's for his Son Solomon, <sup>19.</sup> but withal prophetically, and typically setting forth the Kingdom of Christ, he attributes all at last to God's Power, and refers all to his Glory in these magnificent Words; *Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doth wondrous Things. And blessed be his glorious Name for ever; and let the whole Earth be fill'd with his Glory; Amen and Amen.*

So likewise in the 89<sup>th</sup> Psalm, though the Psalmist had been complaining just before, and expostulating with God; *Lord how long wilt thou hide thy Face, for ever? And where are thy former loving Kindnesses which thou swarest unto David, in thy Truth?* yet his Complaints are presently silenc'd, and his Expostulation soon turn'd into a joyful Benediction. *Blessed be the Lord for evermore. Amen and Amen.*

S E R M.

XIII.



ONCE more, in the 106<sup>th</sup> *Psalms*, after a large Rehearsal of the Backslidings, and Rebellions of *Israel*, and the interchangeable Mixture of Mercies and Judgments, with which God had exercis'd them, he prays at last for a final Deliverance, and makes God's own Glory the Motive to obtain it: And then immediately subjoins his Praise and Thanksgiving, as if it had been already obtain'd. *Save us O Lord our God, and gather us from among the Heathen, to give Thanks unto thy holy Name, and to triumph in thy Praise. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting; and let all the People say Amen. Praise ye the Lord.* It is plain therefore from the Instances given, that Praise, and Benediction does constantly make a Part in Scripture Devotion; and consequently it cannot be out of Place in our Lord's Prayer, especially since the *Doxology* here inserted, is express'd much in the same Terms, with that which *David* himself once us'd upon a solemn Occasion, after he, and all the People had made their Offerings to God, towards the Building of a Temple, upon which *David* said (as it is)

Ver. 47,  
48.

*For thine is the Kingdom, &c.*

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is) 1 Chron. xxix. 10, 11, &c. Blessed be thou Lord God of Israel our Father, for ever and ever. Thine O Lord is the Greatness, and the Power, and the Glory, and the Victory, and the Majesty; for all that is in Heaven and in Earth is thine; thine is the Kingdom O Lord, and thou art exalted as Head above all. But

SERM.  
XIII.  
~

Thirdly, If we consider the Exactness, and Order of this most absolute Form of Prayer, the *Doxology* can by no Means be spar'd. For I think 'tis on all Hands allow'd, that this is a Form so very exact, and perfect, that it ought to be esteem'd a compleat Summary of all Devotion; and yet such it could not be, if it were wanting in one main essential Part of it, viz. Praise and Benediction. And it is not to be imagin'd, that our blessed Lord, in teaching his Disciples to pray, should leave that wholly out of his Instructions, which has so natural a Connexion with Prayer, and is in the Scriptures inseparably join'd with it, in those very Scriptures which were indited by the same Spirit, that directed him in the Composure of this Form; for in the 4<sup>th</sup> Chapter to the *Philippians*,



SERM. *lippians*, we are exhorted in every Thing  
 XIII. *by Prayer and Supplication, with Thanksgiv-*  
 ~~~~~ *ing to let our Request be made known*  
unto God; from whence we may gather,
that wheresoever there is Room for the Ex-
ercise of Prayer (and that is in every
Thing, or upon every Occasion) that there
also Praise, and Thanksgiving ought not
to be excluded.

AND besides, if we observe it, the *Doxology* seems to fall in exactly well with that admirable Order into which this divine Prayer is cast. For as in the Entrance, the Glory of God is made the Subject of our ardent Wishes and Desires, so here in the Conclusion, 'tis made the Entertainment of our devout Wonder, and the Matter of our thankful, and joyful Acknowledgments. And by this Means our Eyes are still kept intent, and fix'd upon the Object of our Adoration; and therefore what we offer unto him is with a perfect Heart, and it is holy, and acceptable in his Sight.

AND by this Time, I think it is evident, what from the Reason of the Thing, the Usage, and Expression of Scripture, and the

For thine is the Kingdom, &c.

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the Perfection, and Order of the Lord's Prayer, that the *Doxology* has a just Title to, and well deserves the Place in which it stands.

SERM.
XIII.

PROCEED we now in the *Second Place*,

II. To explain, and apply the several Particulars contain'd in it, from whence it will farther appear, that 'tis a special Incitement, and Encouragement in the Performance of our Devotions; and consequently that 'tis placed here very usefully, and therefore, 'tis to be hop'd, canonically.

THE *First* Particular is, *thine is the Kingdom*. And this is an express Acknowledgment of his sovereign Right, and Dominion over the whole World, more particularly the rational Species, for whose Subsistence and Comfort, he has plentifully provided in this Life; and for whose happy Reception he has prepar'd everlasting Mansions in the next.

AND in the mean Time, they are under the Protection of his Providence, which watches over them for their Good; they are under the Guidance of his Word,
which

S E R M. which leads them in the Way that they
 XIII. should go: They are under the Direction
 of his Commands, in *keeping of which*
there is great Reward, and for breaking
 of which the Punishment will be as terrible: And, besides all these subordinate
 Means tending to the same good End,
 they have the mighty Aids of God's Holy
 Spirit to make up what is wanting in their
 own Strength, and perfect their Obedience,
 and with that their Happiness.

So that in owning God's Sovereignty
 and Dominion we do in Effect give the
 Glory to him, but take the Benefit, and
 Comfort to ourselves. For the more we
 consider it, the more we shall be con-
 vinc'd, that the Power which he exercises
 over us, is a beneficent Power, upon which
 our Strength and Health, our Life and
 Safety, our Hope and Joy; in a word, all
 that we can wish for, or are capable of,
 our ultimate End, and chiefest Good do
 entirely depend.

BESIDES, if we can keep our Thoughts
 from scattering during the length of so
 concise a Prayer, we must needs remem-
 ber that this our King to whom we do
 Homage

Homage in the first Branch of the *Doxology*, S E R M. XIII.
is the very same, that we were admitted
to call *our Father*, in the Introduction to
this Prayer. And consequently we may
presume, that he has not only a political
Care, but even a natural Affection for us;
as being not only the Creator, but also the
kind Preserver, and Redeemer of Man-
kind; all which bespeaks him to be per-
petually inclin'd to do us all the Good we
are capable of; and to promote, and secure
our Welfare all that is possible.

AND, when we reflect upon it, what
can be of greater Force to quicken, and
invigorate our Devotions, than this Consi-
deration? If indeed God were represented
like some arbitrary Tyrant that delights in
the Misery, and Ruine of his Subjects, or
like some careless, insignificant Prince, who
makes it none of his Business to provide
for his People's Safety, or to redress their
Grievances; then it would make us trem-
ble to approach him, and our very Lips
would quiver in uttering our Prayers, or
at best we should have but little Heart to
petition him for any Thing.

BUT

SERM.

XIII.

BUT since he is our gracious King and Governour, and since he is likewise a tender, and compassionate Father to us, what is there that we can reasonably wish for, which we may not confidently expect? Nay, what is there that we can lawfully pray for, which we may not also hope effectually to obtain? Seeing that (besides the Merit, and Mediation of a dying Saviour) we have the Generosity of a princely Benefactor, and the Bowels of an affectionate Parent alway pleading in our Behalf.

THE *Second* Thing recogniz'd in this *Doxology* is the Power of God; *i. e.* his Omnipotence, or his infinite irresistible Power of doing all Things that are by any Means possible to be effected. And this it is which makes him the absolute Master of all Causes, and all Effects, of all Actions, and all Events, even those that depend upon the voluntary Choice of his Creatures; so that he is able to bring Good out of Evil, (which is the very Glory, if I may so say, of Omnipotence itself) and can make all the Designs, and Attempts of evil Spirits, and wicked Men subservient

to his own most gracious Purposes, even SERM.
besides, and contrary to the Intentions of XIII.
the immediate Actors.

AND this is the great Prerogative of the King of Heaven, and that which eminently distinguishes him from all earthly Potentates. For their Power is always cramp'd and confin'd, clogg'd and incumber'd, check'd and mated, and oftentimes master'd, and broken all to Pieces; and, which is the Misery of all, by endeavouring to maintain it, they frequently expose their People to that inevitable Ruine from which they cannot defend themselves. And, if the Dependance of Creatures upon their God, had no better Foundation, their Condition would be but hazardous at best, and his kingly Protection but little worth.

BUT we may well sing *Allelujah* with the Elders in the *Revelation*, xix. 6. *For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth*, and he is our Protector, who can do whatsoever pleaseth him in Heaven, and in Earth.

AND this is a sure Ground of Confidence to us, when we have Recourse unto him in Prayer. For we are still under the
Shadow

SERM. Shadow of the Almighty, and he is our
 XIII. Refuge, and our Fortrefs in whom we
 trust. He is able to relieve us in all our
 Straits and Extremities, and to deliver us in
 all our Distress and Danger: And there-
 fore we have no Reason to fear the *Ter-
 ror by Night, nor the Arrow that flieth by
 Day; nor the Pestilence that walketh in
 Darknes; nor the Destruction that wasteth
 at Noon-day*: Nay, if all the Powers of
 Hell should combine against us, and beset
 us with Temptations and Solicitations,
 with Snares and Devices, with Threats
 and Allurements, or even violently assault
 us with Persecution and Death; yet, if we
 can but open our Eyes, and look up to-
 wards Heaven, they that be with us are
 more, and mightier than those that be
 with them; for we are still in the Hands
 of an omnipotent God, and Myriads of
 Angels have the Charge of us.

Thirdly, THE next Thing which we
 celebrate in this *Doxology*, is the Glory of
 God. And the Glory of God (if I might
 venture to fully it with such a Description)
 is the Splendour of that inconceivable Ma-
 jesty with which he is cloath'd, and the
 Mirrour

Mirroure of that absolute Perfection with SERM.
XIII.
which he is endu'd; variously, and wonderfully displaying itself in all the Works of Creation, Providence, and Grace. So that when we ascribe Glory to God, we do in Effect but own him to be what he is, reverencing, and adoring the Greatness, and Dignity of his Nature, which is infinitely exalted above all other Beings, and setting forth his eminent Perfections, that cannot well be conceal'd.

AND though the God of Glory can receive no Accession from any officious Act of ours, yet no doubt it is well-pleasing in his Sight, that his Creatures should endeavour to frame worthy Apprehensions of him, and elevate their Thoughts concerning him to the highest Pitch that is possible, and by publishing his Praises to others, provoke them also to glorify him in like Manner.

AND certainly 'tis a mighty Privilege, and an ample Foundation of Assurance, that we are furnish'd with so powerful a Motive as is the Glory of God, to recommend ourselves, and our Prayers to his Acceptance. For as nothing else, nothing,

SERM. I mean, that is extrinſical to his Nature,
 XIII. could properly, or effectually move him;
 so this, if we be not wanting to ourselves,
 can hardly fail to do it. For when we
 tune our Prayers to the Praise of his Glory,
 we do in Reality entreat him to do Right
 to his own Perfections, we conjure him by
 his infinite Power, and Justice, and Good-
 ness, and Truth, to which he always has
 Regard, and for the Sake of which he
 will suffer himself to be entreated, if the
 Petitioner be in any Degree capable of Fa-
 vour. And therefore this is always repre-
 sented in Scripture, as the Anchor of
 Hope, and the last Effort of earnest Sup-
 plication: Thus *David* in great Distress
 Pf. lxxix. 9. cries out, *Help us O God of our Salvation
 for the Glory of thy Name, and purge away
 our Sins for thy Name's Sake.* And then it
 Ver. 10. follows; *Wherefore should the Heathen say,
 where is now their God?* As if the *Psalmist*
 had said, Thy Honour, O Lord, is like to
 come in question, and therefore extend thy
 Mercy to us, lest the Blasphemers should
 deny thy Power. So in another Place,
 Pf. xxv. 11. *For thy Name's Sake, pardon my Iniquity,
 for it is great.* Not that the Greatness of
 his

his Sin could be any Motive with God to SERM.
forgive it, but because the Mercy of God XIII.
was still greater, and therefore he lays
hold of that as his only Refuge.

Fourthly and Lastly, His Eternity, and
Immutability are here asserted: His Eter-
nity is express'd in those Words, *for ever*
and ever; and his Immutability is implied
in their Relation to what went before.
For thine is the Kingdom, the Power and
the Glory for ever and ever. And indeed,
if God were either mortal or mutable, if
he could either cease to *be*, or to *be* what
he is, he would no longer be the Object of
our Trust, nor could we pray unto him with
any comfortable, or well-grounded Hope.

BUT since he ever reigneth, and so is
willing to protect, and succour us; since
he is ever-powerful, and so able to do it;
since his Attributes, and Perfections are
ever consistent with themselves, and since
it will ever be his Glory to exert, and ma-
nifest them upon all proper Occasions.
I say, since he is thus unchangeably *the*
same yesterday, to day, and for ever; he is
for that very Reason the immoveable Cen-
tre of our Faith and Affiance: And we

SE R M. may *ask without doubting*, for the Pardon
 XIII. of our Sins, Strength to resist Temptation,
 Deliverance from the Snare in which we
 have been caught, a Competence of the
 good Things of this Life, or any Blessing
 temporal or spiritual; I say, we may ask
 for all these Things, without doubting, as
 being confidently assur'd, that they are to
 be obtain'd from him, whose Mercy like
 his Essence endures for ever; and if we
 obtain them not, we may well be con-
 vinc'd, that 'tis not because God is unable,
 or indeed unwilling to give, but because
 we ourselves are unworthy, and uncapa-
 ble to receive.

AND from what has been said it is
 abundantly plain, how great an Incitement,
 and Encouragement to Devotion the Ac-
 knowledgment of God's Dominion, and
 Power, and Glory, and his eternal, and
 unchangeable Duration is. And blessed be
 his glorious Name for animating us thus
 to pray unto him, and thus to praise him,
 as in this *Doxology*.

ALL that remains farther to be account-
 ed for, is the Signification of the Word
Amen, with which the whole is closed up.

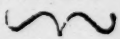
AND

For thine is the Kingdom, &c.

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SERM.

XIII.



AND this Word, as it was frequently in Use among the *Jews*, so it was very frequently in our *Saviour's* Mouth, and is therefore piously retain'd in the *Christian Church*. Some will have it to be an Adverb of wishing or consenting, and to be rendred, *so be it*, others an Adverb of affirming, and confirming, and to be rendred, *so it is*. But without calling in the Critics to fix its Signification, it may serve very well, if we take it in the Latitude to express our ardent Desires of, and our hearty Consent in the Matter of our Prayers, together with a regardful Attention thereunto, and a firm Persuasion that we shall effectually obtain whatsoever we faithfully ask according to the Will of God; that is, that we shall obtain either the Thing itself in kind, or else an equivalent (and better) something that is more needful, and more useful, and every Way more desirable. So that in all these Respects this *pregnant* Word, is as it were the proper Signature of an affectionate and devout, a serious, and a faithful Heart, which we ought to set to our Petitions and Praises, before we send them into God's

Z 3

holy

SERMON. holy Presence, as a Testimony with what
 XIII. Disposition and Intention they are presented.

MAY the good God who has graciously afforded us all these Helps to our Infirmities, and these Spurs and Incentives to Devotion, still more and more enlighten our Judgments, enflame our Affections, and sanctify us wholly to his Service.

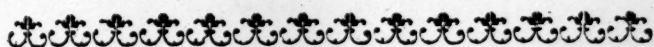
And now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be Honour and Glory, for ever and ever. Amen. And let all the People say, Amen.





S E R M O N X I V .

The Qualifications required for
hearing the Word profitably.



M A R K i v . 24.

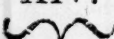
*And he said unto them, take heed
what you hear.*

Parall. L U K E viii. 18.

Take heed therefore how ye hear.



THESE Words contain very whole-S E R M.
some, and seasonable Advice to X I V .
all that are *Hearers*, and would
be *Doers* of the Word. To wit, that they
Z 4 take

SERM. *take heed what they hear.* And methinks,
 XIV.  at the same Time, they suggest this private Admonition to me, that I also *take heed* what I speak. And I would to God that all Men would *take heed* what they speak, especially in divine Matters: For then it would be sufficient only to beg the *Hearer's Attention*, and in some Respects, not so needful to awaken their Caution.

BUT our blessed Saviour seems to bespeak both *here* from his *Disciples*. For the Word *Βλέπετε* is capable of either Signification, and is taken in both in the *New Testament* *.

AND indeed it seems no more than what was necessary. For although they had the Happiness to receive the *immediate* Testimony of the Son of God, and to see it confirm'd by the most *astonishing* Miracles, so that they had no Reason to question God's *Veracity*, when so authentically sealed with the Signet of his Power. Yet *Christ* himself did forewarn them, that

Mark xiii. *false Christs, and false Prophets should arise*
 22.

* See Rev. iii. 18. Rom. xi. 10. Luke viii. 10. Mat. xiv. 30. compared with Mat. xxiv. 4. Marc. viii. 15. xiii. 9.

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rise, and with counterfeit Signs, and lying SERM.
Wonders deceive (if possible) the very elect. XIV.

And though there had not been so much Danger from these bold, and crafty Seducers, yet he that *knew what was in Man*, Jo. ii. 24. *knew* also that their *Slowness* of Apprehension, their *Grossness* of Conception, their *Blindness* and *Inadvertency*, the Love of Pleasure, the Distraction of worldly Cares, and the Fear of Persecution were like to prove great Obstacles to their Believing, and embracing the Doctrines of *Christianity*, and violent Temptations to make them revolt from it; either in Faith, or in Practice, e'er they were well establish'd in it. And surely we that live in the very Dregs of Time, in the lowest Declension of Piety, and the nearest Approach to *Scepticism* and *Infidelity*; cannot but think our selves expos'd to the same Snares, and the same Dangers, only with this Difference, that we are less provided against them. And that which makes our Case the more hazardous is, that the present Age is so unreasonably addicted to *Liberty*; Liberty of thinking, Liberty of prophesying, and Liberty of living too: For where should
all

SERM all this end but in Licentiousness? And
 XIV. since the State of Things is such, 'tis plain,
 that whilst the great, and concerning Truths
 of Religion do challenge all our Attention;
 at the same Time bold Contradictions, fly
 Errors, unsound Opinions, and not unlike
 Practices will require our utmost Cau-
 tion.

AND he that would be a profitable
 Hearer of the Word, must exercise both
 with equal Application; and that in Re-
 spect, *First* of the Matter propounded and
 deliver'd, and then of the Manner in which
 he ought to receive them. For so much
 may be collected from the Words of my
 Text, compar'd with the *parallel* Place in
 St. Luke: For here 'tis τὶ, there πῶς ἀκούετε.
 So that we are equally oblig'd to take heed
 both *what*, and *how* we hear. And from
 the two *Evangelists* thus compar'd; I shall
 raise these two Heads of Discourse.

Luke viii.
 18.

I. *First*, THAT we ought to take heed, that
 is duly and impartially to weigh, and con-
 sider the Doctrines, and Precepts of *Chri-*
stianity, such as may be prov'd from the
 holy

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holy Scriptures; and to beware of the ^{SERM.}
contrary. XIV.

II. *Secondly*, THAT we ought to take heed, that is, to be careful, and cautious that we entertain them with such Affections, and Preparations of Soul, as are suitable to such sacred, and weighty Matters, lest the Seed sown should prove unfruitful, thro' any Indisposition on our Part.

I. OF the *First*, that we ought to *take heed*, that is, duly, and impartially to weigh, and consider the Doctrines, and Precepts of *Christianity*. By the Doctrines, and Precepts of *Christianity*, I mean all that is propounded to us in holy Scripture, either as the Standard of our Belief, or Direction of our Practice. For Faith, and Repentance are the *Alpha* and *Omega* of the *Gospel*, and do in their extended Signification, comprize all that is requir'd of a *Christian*, in order to his eternal Salvation; in the Furtherance of which, each has its proper Part, not separately or independantly, but in Conjunction, or rather Union one with another. For sound Faith is the only sure Foundation of an acceptable Obedience;
and

SERM.

XIV.

and sincere, Obedience is the clearest Testimony, the fairest Ornament, the last finishing, and Perfection of Faith; and 'tis then (and then only) that we are completely built up in our most holy Faith, when 'tis adorn'd with a suitable Life and Conversation. He that is an *Infidel*, or *Misbeliever*, either does not worship God at all, because he knows him not, or worships him amiss, and offers an Abomination instead of a Sacrifice; because he is possess'd with undue Apprehensions either of his Nature, or his Will, or both. And he that is never so orthodox a Believer in point of Judgment, unless the Seeds and Principles of his Faith take rooting in his Heart, and fructify unto good Works, is *worse than an Infidel*. So near, and so natural is the Alliance betwixt a well-grounded Belief, and a religious Conversation! And agreeably thereto, 'tis in the very Constitution of our most excellent Religion, that there is nothing in it that rests barely in Speculation, no one Article in the whole System, but what is fairly reducible to Practice, without much knitting of Consequences; no Doctrines

Strine but what if fully assented to, and heartily embrac'd, has a very wholesome, and powerful Influence upon our Lives and Manners. Even the sublimest of *Mysteries*, that of the adorable *Trinity*, and the Incarnation of the Son of God, with their proper Dependances, how do they teach us *to walk humbly with God*; whose Goodness is as eminently conspicuous, in designing our Redemption; as his Wisdom is unsearchable in the Means, and Methods of effecting it! How do they imbue our Minds with reverent, amiable, and worthy *Idea's* of God! How do they strike us with Admiration of his stupendous Love to Mankind! How do they enflame our Hearts with a mutual Love of him, that first loved us? In summ, how lively, and vigorous do they render our Hopes, how chearful, how easy our Obedience? And as these, and all other the Articles of our *Christian* Faith, do in their natural Tendency terminate in Obedience; so on the other Hand, there is no Branch of Duty, no genuine Instance of Obedience, but what is originally founded upon some correspondent Doctrine, and

7 whatso-

SERM. whatsoever is not so, can be resolv'd into
 XIV. nothing else, but Superstition, and Will-
 worship. Thus for instance, if it be the
 true Catholic Doctrine (as most certainly
 it is) that *Jesus Christ* is the eternal Son
 of God, of one Essence, and Substance
 with his Father; then to believe in him,
 has the Nature, and Force of an *Evangelical*
 Command, and we are oblig'd to pay
 him the same Honour we do his Father,
 otherwise our Faith is vain, and fruitless:
 And on the contrary, if it be the univer-
 sal Practice of *Christians* to worship him
 with divine Worship, (as most deservedly
 it is) then the Reason must be, because
 they are firmly perswaded of the Truth of
 his *Divinity*; otherwise this their Practice
 were altogether unwarrantable. For he
 that believes him to be God, and yet robs
 him of the Honour due unto his holy
 Name, in Spight of his Profession, is no
 better than a *practical Atheist*: And he
 that believes him to be no more than a
 meer Creature, and yet pays him that
 Adoration which is properly divine, is in
 the Formality of the Act a flat Idolater.
 So that if you take away that Analogy
 which

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which ought to be betwixt a *Christian's* S E R M. XIV.
Belief and Practice; you do in Effect take away the Strength and Beauty, the Value, and Efficacy of both. For Faith is to Obedience, as the Basis is to the Superstructure: The former without the latter, is lame and imperfect; and this without that, is weak, groundless, and irrational. The Scope of the whole Argument is briefly this. If there be such a necessary, and inseparable Connection, betwixt the Belief and Practice of a *Christian*; (as 'tis manifest there is) if the Doctrines, and Precepts of *Christianity* do mutually infer, and suppose each other, (as most evidently they do) then with the same Evidence it will follow, that they do both equally deserve, or rather demand the most serious Attention, and consideration of every *Christian Auditor*; whilst they are faithfully propos'd, rationally prov'd, pathetically enforc'd, or seasonably applied by the Minister of God. And this is the very Thing that was to be prov'd.

NOR do I foresee any Objection, that can lie against what has been said; unless it should be ask'd me after all, what Need

SERM. of so laborious a Proof in so plain a Matter? To which I answer, that I could be easily contented, that it should pass for unnecessary Labour, if really it be so. But on the other Side, 'tis too notorious, I am afraid, that we live in an Age, that glories in the Privilege; not only of examining and discussing, but rejecting, and exploding the most sacred, and acknowledg'd Truths. And to these *wise* Disputers of this World, the Thanks are due, that we are so often put upon the unreasonable Task of proving Maxims. For even in the Case now before us, there are those that will gravely tell us, and indeed truly too; that the main End and Design of the *Gospel*, is Holiness here, in order to Happiness hereafter; and consequently that such Doctrines, as have no Tendency to promote Virtue and Godliness, are not truly *Evangelical*, but rather the idle Speculations, and addle Productions of *Scholastic* Heads. A very orthodox Conclusion indeed! if this be their whole Drift and Meaning: But we cannot possibly gratify them so far, as to yield; that the mysterious Articles of the Trinity, are to be reckon'd

reckon'd in that Number; and therefore (if I mistake not the Men) I am sure, they conclude but to little Purpose; unless they should urge it farther against the Necessity of Faith in general; (as they sometimes do.)

S E R M.
XIV.

FOR there is an Author of a peculiar Strain, who in his brief Notes upon St. *Athanasius's* Creed tells us *briefly* and *roundly*, that a good Life is absolutely necessary to Salvation; but a right Belief in these Points, (*viz.* those that are contain'd in that Creed) that have been always controverted in the Churches of God, is in no Degree necessary, much less necessary above all Things. And I may venture to add for him, that if not in these, then not in any other: For, if these great *Mysteries of Godliness*, be not (as St. Paul says) *without Controversy*, I know not by what Privilege any other can stand exempted, especially, if they should light into the Hands of a *Note-maker*.

BUT you see that according to him, if a Man lives but up to the Principles of Morality; all his *Scepticism* and *Infidelity* in Matters of Faith, will be excus'd as a

SERM.

XIV.

pure innocent Error of the Understanding, and no Prevarication of the Will. Now in answer to this, I might observe (with the learned Dr. *Sherlock*) how this Opinion opens the Sluce-gates to an Inundation of all manner of *Heresy*; although, if Faith be so useless, *Heresy* must needs be a very harmless Thing. I might also add, how fair it seems to bid for an Indifference in all Professions of Religion; but waving these, and other the acute, and solid Arguments alledg'd by that excellent Person; I shall content myself to say, what I have already prov'd, that if there be such a mutual Dependance, and necessary Relation between sound Believing, and holy Living, then certainly they are both equally requir'd, and consequently all that this Author has advanc'd, is both impious and heterodox. And it was for the Sake of such Men as these, that I have been forc'd to inculcate what in itself seems so plain, *viz.* that the well-dispos'd *Hearer* is oblig'd seriously to attend, as well to the Doctrines, as Precepts of *Christianity*. But lest any one should be at a Loss, what these are, or where to find them; lest he should

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should be *abus'd by the Slight of crafty* SERM.
Men, or tofs'd to and fro with every Wind XIV.
of Doctrine, or beguil'd of his Reward by a
voluntary Humility. Therefore,

Secondly, IT is to be remember'd, that the Doctrines, and Precepts which call for the Hearer's Attention, are such, as can be prov'd by sacred Scripture; for the Scripture being the most authentic, and compleat Directory of Faith and Manners, *all such, and such only are to be receiv'd.*

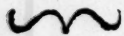
First, All such. For if these Writings be divinely inspir'd, and have the wise, and holy God for their Author (as indeed the Character of Divinity shines through every Page of the Book) and if they be convey'd down to us, without Mixture or Depravation, (as there is no Shadow of Suspicion to the contrary) then whatsoever is either expresly there reveal'd, or virtually contain'd, does justly challenge our awful Belief, and religious Observance. Nor is it any Matter of Scruple, that there are Heights beyond the Scale of humane Reason, lofty Truths that do infinitely surmount the most elevated Understanding. For be they never so dark, and mysterious

SERM. in their Nature, or perhaps inexplicable as to
 XIV. the *Modus*; yet if the Revelation in Scrip-
 ture be plain, or the Consequence from
 them just and necessary, that alone is suffi-
 cient to ascertain my Belief. For humane
 Reason is no more the Standard of all pos-
 sible Truth, than humane Strength is the
 Measure of all that is the Object of Power.
 Omniscience, as well as Omnipotence, is
 a divine Perfection, of which no Creature
 is capable, because all created Beings are
 finite; and their Perfections (if any thing
 belonging to a Creature deserves that
 Name) are also finite. But there is no
 manner of Proportion betwixt finite, and
 infinite, and therefore whatsoever is infi-
 nite, can no more be comprehended by a
 finite Understanding; than the greater can
 be contain'd in the less. Thus, suppose
 any Body to be of a Figure perfectly
 round, and of a Bulk too great to be con-
 tain'd in my Hand; the more I contract
 my Hollow, the faster I endeavour to
 hold it, the sooner it slips from me, as
 being too big for my Grasp. And such is
 the Notion of Infinite to the Mind, in the
 Contemplation of which, the more I in-

tend my Thoughts, the farther I am from SERM.
understanding it, and am forc'd at last to XIV.
let go the boundless Speculation, as being
too vast for my Comprehension.

AND, even in *Physical Theories*, altho' there is nothing in Nature but has its determinate Bounds, yet if we know not where to fix them, the *Ideas* we conceive must necessarily be very confus'd, and obscure. As for instance, the Divisibility of Matter, though of itself a known, and familiar Property; yet having no fix'd, and certain Limits, how does it entangle us with Subtleties, and confound us with irreconcilable Difficulties and Contradictions! Since therefore 'tis impossible for us, to have an adequate Notion of Infinity, and since we are so easily puzzled, even in natural Things; it can be no Wonder, it ought to be no Scandal to any *Christian*, that the sacred *Oracles* should reveal such *Mysteries*, as are vastly disproportionate to our finite Faculties; whether it be concerning the incomprehensible Nature of God, and the ineffable Manner of his Existence, or the unfathomable Abyss

SER M. of his Counsels, and the Miracle of our
XIV. Redemption.



BUT *Secondly*, Besides this our natural Inability, it is to be consider'd, that both the Understanding, and the *Will* of Man, are in a State of Degeneracy, and *Apostasy* from God; and therefore it is not without Reluctancy, that they submit to him, in the glorious Manifestations of himself, his Counsels, his Will, and his Works. And 'tis by a sort of *Captivity* (as the *Apostle* says) *that every Thought is brought to the Obedience of Christ*. But nevertheless, the Prerogative of God extends to the whole Man, and we are bound to deny ourselves, and resign Reason, Will, Affections, and all to his Direction and Disposal; and that so much the rather, because through our contracted Blindness and Corruption, we are too apt to reason perversely, and chuse perniciously for our selves; and can never be sufficiently secured against both, but when we commit ourselves to the Guidance of an infallible Teacher.

2 COR. X.
5.

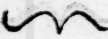
WHEN-

WHENSOEVER therefore, God interposes his Authority, we are equally oblig'd both to believe and obey, notwithstanding all the Difficulty of Conception, in Matters of Faith; and Irksomeness of Performance, in point of Duty.

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XIV.

AGAIN, if God be true, and just, and wise, and good, (as God must necessarily be) then whatsoever derives its Original from him, must still be in Conformity to these his unchangeable Attributes. And therefore abating his Right of Sovereignty) we may, nay in Justice, and Modesty we ought, readily to acquiesce in all that he has thought fit to declare, or impose either for the Exercise of our Faith, or the Trial of our Obedience; because he cannot be suppos'd, in any of his Dispensations, to deviate from that Goodness, Wisdom, Justice, and Truth, which is essential to him.

THE Sum of all in short, is this; that since the Scripture is the undoubted Word of God entirely, and sincerely deliver'd down to us, from the Time it was first indicted; it follows, *that all such Doctrines,* and Precepts, as may be prov'd from

S E R M
XIV.  thence, do deserve the Attention of every faithful Hearer, and command their own Reception. Nor ought it to stagger our Belief, that we cannot sound the depth of all the Mysteries revealed unto us: For since our Faculties are by Nature finite, and by Sin much weaken'd and impair'd; since our Reason is so *pore-blind*, and our Will so crooked and perverse; no Wonder, if the natural Man has no just *Idea*, or suitable Relish of those Things, that are spiritually discern'd: But nevertheless, since God has an unquestionable Right of prescribing, and imposing, and since we may be assur'd, that he exercises this his Right in Faithfulness and Truth, since he can neither deceive, nor be deceiv'd; we are oblig'd in Honour, and Submission to him, readily to believe whatsoever he speaks, and heartily to obey whatsoever he commands. But

Secondly, As those Doctrines, and Precepts which may be prov'd by Scripture, are to be entertain'd, and embrac'd by all *Christians*; so again, he that *takes heed what he hears*, ought not so much as to lend an Ear to any other. For the *Scripture*

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ture is a Rule of Faith and Manners, no SERM. XIV.
less absolute, and perfect in its Kind, than
infallible in its Testimony. But when we
say it is perfect in its Kind, it is not to
be thought, that it precisely defines every
Mode and Circumstance in the External
of Religion; or that it descends to every
Trifle, and petty Concernment of Life;
but only that it clearly contains all that a
Christian ought to know, and believe to
his Souls Health. And indeed granting
(with the Apostle) that *all Scripture is giv-* ² Tim. iii.
16.
en by Inspiration of God; and that it vouch-
safes us great, and wonderful Discoveries
concerning the Reconciliation of God and
Man in *Christ Jesus*, far above all humane
Wit and Invention. I say, granting this,
it must also be allow'd, that it is in every
Point sufficient to promote, and effect the
End it aims at, and consequently make us
wise unto Salvation.

FOR either God did design the everlast-
ing Happiness of Mankind, in these his
Revelations, and Overtures, or he did not:
If he did, and yet omitted something, that
was simply necessary, in order to this great
End and Attainment; this would shew
such

SERM. such want of Fore-sight and Contrivance,
 XIV. as no wise *Agent* would be guilty of, much
 less, he that is *omniscient*.

If he did not, and yet invites, and intreats us to accept, what he never meant to give; this would betray a Difference between his secret, and reveal'd Will, with a Vengeance, this would be such a piece of Cruelty and Mockery, as is not to be reconcil'd with what we call good Nature in Man, much less with the Goodness of that God, *whose Mercy is over all his Works*. Therefore, unless we think good at once to impeach the divine Wisdom, Goodness and Truth; we must own that the Scripture is a most compleat Treasure of necessary Knowledge, and alone sufficient to beget in us a saving Faith, and furnish us unto all good Works.

For certainly, if it were wanting in any thing, it would at least direct us whence, and how its Defects might be supplied: But there is not the least Foot-step of any such Direction: It sends us not to the immediate Impulse of the Spirit, nor to an infallible Judge (which is the different *Enthusiasm*, of Popery, and Fanaticism;)

naticism;) nor to oral Traditions, of which SERM.
 the Church of *Rome* (it seems) has the sole XIV.
 Custody. And therefore all these we e-
 qually renounce and abhor, together with
 those bold Innovations, and dangerous Pra-
 ctices, that are grafted upon them, by
 their several Abettors.

FOR as to the *First* of these, although
 there is a Promise, *that the Spirit of Truth*
shall lead us into all Truth; yet we know,
 that this Spirit cannot contradict itself:
 And therefore, since extraordinary Illu-
 minations, and Assistances are ceas'd, and
 the ordinary continued only, in Concur-
 rence with the Scripture; which was in-
 dicted by the same Spirit: We ought not
 to believe every Spirit, but try the Spirits,
 whether they are of God; and of God they
 cannot be, if they suggest any thing con-
 trary to the written Word; *For hereby* 1 Jo. iv. 6.
know we the Spirit of Truth, and the
Spirit of Error; the one sent from the
 God of Truth, the other suborn'd by the
Father of Lies.

BUT then, as to the glorious Pretence
 of Infallibility; there is not the least Sha-
 dow of a Promise in holy Writ to support
 it;

SERM. it; and indeed, if it be taken for a personal
 XIV. Attribute, it is utterly incompatible
 with the Nature of mere Man, who is necessarily subject to Error; and therefore we trust not on that broken Reed.

NOR do we run to the broken Cisterns of Tradition, which are equally groundless and uncertain: More uncertain indeed than the sacred Writings can be, which have been dispers'd in numberless Copies throughout all Countries, translated into all Languages, and handed down from Age to Age without any Addition, Diminution, or material Alteration. But we will suppose for once, that the Certainty of Conveyance is the same, written, or unwritten. And admitting it so to be, I would only ask, whether these pretended Assistances be by way of Supplement to the Scripture, or no? If they are, whether the Truths they derive, be absolutely necessary to Salvation, or not? For if not, what Defect is it in the Scripture to want them? If they say they are necessary, let them produce their Instances, and we'll prove them to be otherwise? Or else shew that they are plainly reveal'd in holy Scripture.

And,

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And, I hope, the *Papists* themselves, will SERM. XIV.
be better advis'd for the future, than to
betray the Cause of *Christianity* so far, as
to rest the Belief of the *Trinity*, and
Transubstantiation upon the same Bottom.
For (God be thanked) we have both
Scripture, and Tradition in Favour of one;
whilst they have neither to patronize the
other.

IN the Upshot of all, though the per-
tinacious Adherents to Tradition, will not
allow the Silence of the Scripture to be
decisive, even in necessary Matters; yet
sure they can have nothing to oppose to a
direct Prohibition. For Tradition (ac-
cording to them) is not to succeed, or to
annul the Scripture, but to compleat it;
and consequently whatever it adds by way
of Supplement, cannot be suppos'd con-
trary to the former *Revelations*. And there-
fore no Antiquity, Prescription, or Au-
thority can oblige me, to the Belief, or
Practice of any Thing, that is formally
condemn'd in holy Scripture. And if so,
it evidently appears, that the Doctrines of
Rome, concerning *Purgatory*, *Invocation of*
Saints, *Adoration of Images*, *Sacrifice of*
the

SERM. *the Mass*, and the like, are foul Cor-
 XIV. ruptions, and Abuses in the *Christian* Faith
 and Worship. And from all that has
 been said, taken together; I conclude, that
 the Scripture is the most authentic, and
 compleat Rule, both of Faith and Man-
 ners; and by Consequence, all those Do-
 ctrines, and Precepts that can be prov'd
 from thence, and only those, are to be
 heeded by the *Christian Hearer*.

I WOULD only observe, before I dismiss
 this Head; that it is not necessary to the
 Proof of any thing from Scripture, that
 it should be express'd there *totidem Verbis*.
 For the Sense of the Scripture is the Scrip-
 ture: And therefore if it be set down in
 equivalent Terms, so as the Inference from
 them be easy, obvious and necessary; 'tis
 a sufficient Ground of Belief. Thus for
 instance, though there be no explicite De-
 claration, that *Christ* is co-essential to God
 the Father; yet since it is said in the *Go-
 spel*, and that by himself, *I and the Fa-
 ther are one*; and this cannot in Reason be
 understood, of any other than the Unity of
 Essence, then we may justly conclude, that
 the Doctrine of the *Nicene Creed* in Rela-
 tion

tion to this Article, is capable of Scripture SERM.
Proof, though not expressly there declared. XIV.

AGAIN, though there be no such Categorical Proposition in Scripture as this, the *Holy Ghost* is God, yet if such Attributes, and Works be there ascrib'd to him, as can belong to no other than the true God, such as *Omniscience, Omnipresence, Creation, Preservation*; then this is Warrant enough, for any *Christian* to give him both the Name, and the Honour due unto it.

AND therefore I have often wonder'd at some Insinuations of *Erasmus* in an Epistle of his to *Carondiletus*, prefix'd to *St. Hilary's Works*. Where he tells us, that the Scripture does indeed sometimes attribute the Name of God to the Son, but never explicitly to the Holy Ghost. Which a little after he improves with this Remark: *Etiam si post Orthodoxorum pia Curiositas idoneis Argumentis, comperit è sacris Literis in Spiritum Sanctum competere, quicquid Filio tribuebatur exceptâ Personarum Proprietate; sed ob impervestigabilem Rerum Divinarum obscuritatem; in Nominibus tribuendis erat Religio: De Re Divinâ*

SERM. *vinâ nefas esse ducebant aliis Verbis loqui*

XIV. *quàm Sacræ Literæ loquerentur.* And then presently adds, lest the Reader should not be dextrous enough in applying his Argument.

Quemadmodum plerique veterum, qui summâ Pietate colebant Filium, tamen homoousion dicere verebantur, quod ea Vox nusquam in sacris Literis haberetur.

I SAY, I cannot but wonder, that so great a Man should so studiously inculcate what has neither Solidity, nor Truth in it. For as to the Godhead of the *Holy Ghost*, if the Name be not to be found in Scripture, the Thing undoubtedly is. And for the *τὸ ὁμοούσιον* of the Son, the Substance of the Word, is there, though not the Word itself. And there may be prudential Reasons to vary sometimes from the Words of Scripture; but there can be no Excuse before God or Man, to vary from the sacred Truths there reveal'd, or indeed to dissemble, or disown them.

AND whereas he is pleas'd to say, that most of the Antients who worshipp'd the Son with the profoundest Reverence, did nevertheless scruple to call him *ὁμοούσιον τῷ*

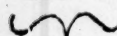
πατρί,

that, because there was no such Word in S E R M. Scripture; the learned Mr. *Bull*, who has XIV. been conversant in this Argument, with a great deal of Diligence and Exactness has undeniably prov'd, that it was the constant Belief of the primitive Fathers, from the *Nicene Council* upwards, to the Times of the *Apostles* themselves. *Eusebius* of *Casarea*, who was present at the *Council of Nice*, and himself no hasty Subscriber to this Article, does ingenuously declare, that upon due Examination they found, that there was nothing imply'd in it, but what might very well comport with the Analogy of that Faith, which had all along been maintain'd, and profess'd by them, and their Predecessors. And that the Word itself was so far from being of a new, or false Coynage, that it had been us'd by some of the most antient Bishops, and famous Writers in their Expositions relating to this Matter; of all which any one may see a very satisfactory Account (if he is willing to be satisfied) in Book I. of *Theodore's Ecclesiastical History*, and Chap. 12.

THE *Arians* indeed did cavil and object, that the Word was an unscriptural Word;

SERM.

XIV.



but the true Reason was, because 'twas too hard to be digested, and too full, and significant to be perverted into any other Sense; and therefore when they found themselves caught; no wonder, if they try'd their venomous Teeth upon the Chain that held them; for as the same Historian relates, *Cap. viii. Lib. 1.* The Catholic Fathers had at first design'd to draw up a Summary of their Faith, in such Scripture Words, as were universally acknowledged, and receiv'd; and the perfidious *Heretics* were as ready to subscribe it, with a Reserve of their own lewd, and distorted Meaning: And by this Slight they deluded, or at least delay'd the Synod for a while, 'till at last they were confounded by the one comprehensive Word ΟΜΟΟΥΣΙΟΝ, which did at once fully, and clearly express all that had been before declar'd in other Words. Nor could they with any Colour reject it as unscriptural, when the very *Skibboleth* of their blasphemous Faction; [* the τὸ ἐκ ὧν τῶν, καὶ τὸ ἦν ποτὲ ὅτε ἐκ ἧν) was wholly of their own

* Theod. Eccl. Hist. Lib. 1. Cap. viii. p. 30 Edit. Reading. Cantabrig. 1720.

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Invention. Whereas indeed the orthodox SERM.
Bishops were not the first Coyners of the XIV.
πὸ ὁμοόσιον, but had receiv'd it upon the
Testimony of their Fathers, and that in
a Sense exactly agreeable to the holy Scrip-
ture. And the *Historian* says, that it had
been us'd by the antient Bishops, both at
Rome, and *Alexandria*, almost one hun-
dred and twenty Years before, in the Refu-
tation of those that made the Son of God
to be a Creature.

IN the Result, I think it is evident by
this Digression (if it be a Digression) that
there is no absolute Necessity, that all which
we receive upon Scripture Authority,
should be expressly there contain'd, and
that to a Tittle: For that may clearly e-
nough be grounded upon Scripture, which
is not there express'd; and that may be
express'd in other Words, that is not in
the same: And in some Cases, it may be
little less than necessary (for so it plainly
was in compiling the *Nicene Creed*) to vary
from Scripture Expressions. And yet this
was so far from being a Falsification, or
an Injury done to the Scripture, that it was
the greatest Justice and Security; there be-

S E R M. ing no other effectual Way to vindicate it
 XIV. from the impious Glosses, and unnatural
 Interpretations of the *Heretics*, who violently wrested it to the Seduction of the Ignorant, the Subversion of the *Christian* Faith, and their own Destruction.

HAVING shewn that the Doctrines, and Precepts of *Christianity* (which are the Object of the Hearer's Attention) ought to be either expressly reveal'd, or virtually contain'd in Scripture, I pass on

Thirdly, To consider a little more particularly the Nature, Evidence, and Importance both of the one, and the other.

AND *First*, THEIR Nature, which is indeed so obvious, that we need not spend much Time or Thought in the Enquiry. For every Effect does naturally resemble its Cause, and by Parity of Reason, God being the Author of the holy Scripture, whatsoever is there recommended to a *Christian's* Belief or Practice, must be suppos'd to bear a just Resemblance, and Conformity to its divine Original.

Now every one that does but think of God, cannot upon the very first Application, but think him to be immutably
 true,

true, and perfectly holy; and his Good-^{SERM.}
ness is so infinite, and withal so commu-^{XIV.}
nicative, that every Day's Experience does
afresh convince us of it; and his Wisdom
is so conspicuous, that the whole Creation
bears ample Testimony to it.

AND these being the express Characters
of the Deity, which were either originally
enstamp'd, or at least are daily imprinted,
and renew'd upon our Minds; it follows,
that all those gracious Discoveries which
he otherwise makes of his Nature, and his
Will; must exactly answer that *Archetypal*
Truth, and Holiness, Wisdom and Good-
ness, which are his very *Essence*. And if
so, then all the Doctrines reveal'd in Scrip-
ture, must be true, as God is true; all his
Laws *holy as he is holy*, and both *good as*
he is good, and wise as he is wise: Good
in themselves, as being deriv'd from the
Fountain of Goodness: Good to us, as be-
ing design'd to promote our everlasting
Bliss and Happiness; and wise, most ad-
mirably wise, as being excellently suited,
and adapted to that great, and glorious
End. And this I take to be a true (tho'
short) Description of the Nature of Evan-

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SERM *gelical Doctrines* and Precepts: And me-
 XIV. thinks, this naked Representation should
 be sufficient to commend our holy Reli-
 gion, with all its seeming Difficulties,
 both to the Reason and Choice of every
 sober, and prudent Enquirer.

FOR if we consider it, as consisting of
 nothing else but the gracious Communica-
 tions of essential Truth, Holiness, Wisdom
 and Goodness, it seems to address our
 Souls in every Faculty, with such power-
 ful Charms as we can't resist, but we must
 at the same Time put a Force upon our
 very Natures. For Truth itself in its na-
 ked Simplicity, is as grateful to the Un-
 derstanding, as Light is to the Eye; And
 as Light in its different Modifications, does
 produce a pleasant Variety of Colours,
 which do at once entertain, and gratify
 the Sight; so the same Truth when
 cloath'd with Holiness, becomes more
 beautiful and amiable; when accompa-
 nied with Goodness, and aiming at Hap-
 piness, 'tis still more desirable; and when
 conducted to this great End by unerring
 Wisdom, 'tis then most wonderful and a-
 stonishing. So that upon the whole, there

is

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is no one Part left unattack'd. But Reason, Will, Affections, and all are by a sweet Compulsion, (as it were) forc'd to submit to him, *whose Yoke is easy, and whose Burthen is light.* SERM.
XIV.

AND all these Considerations summ'd up together, do mainly serve to improve our Knowledge, encrease our Faith, silence our Doubts, and restrain our ignorant Curiosity. And withal, they do strangely invigorate our Hopes, heighten our Devotion, and inflame our Love. 'Tis true indeed, our Knowledge is not always commensurate to those noble Objects, it is concern'd about; *For we know in Part, and prophesy in Part:* But nevertheless in those Cases, where 'tis most defective, there is the larger Scope given for the Exercise of Faith, Love, and Admiration. For though the depth of the Riches of the Wisdom, and Knowledge of God, be too vast for us to sound the Bottom; yet his Mercy is sweetly mingled with the Stream, and appears in the very Surface. 1 Cor. xiii. 9.

NOR have we any greater Reason to suspend our Assent, because there are some Mysteries reveal'd, which do infinitely exceed

SERM.

XIV.

~v~

ceed our slender Comprehension, than we have to slacken our Desire, or Pursuit after Heaven and Happiness; because as it is written, *1 Cor. ii. 9. Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither have enter'd into the Heart of Man the Things which God hath prepared for them that love him.* Whereas indeed, the one as well as the other is to be reserv'd, as the Compliment of our future Felicity, when we shall enter into Joy, and see *Face to Face, and know as we are known.* But in the mean Time, whilst we are on this Side that blessed *State of Vision* and Fruition, (seeing and enjoying) 'tis no small Privilege to be establish'd in the right Notion of the Nature of the Gospel Institution. For the Man that is thoroughly convinc'd how true and holy, wise and good the Principles of *Christianity* are, doctrinal as well as practical; is as much fortified against the Danger both of Error and Sin, as humane Frailty will admit.

BECAUSE he is possess'd aforehand with such happy Prejudices, as do at once exclude all the nice, and prophane Objections of natural Reason, and the vicious Reluctances

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luctances of Flesh and Blood. And by this S E R M.
Means the Mind is left free to receive, and XIV.
embrace all that the Scripture binds upon
us, (as Matter of Faith or Practice) how
incredible, how difficult soever it may ap-
pear to carnal Sense, and unenlighten'd
Reason. So that this is the Mound, and
Safeguard both of *Creed* and *Decalogue*,
and an excellent Antidote against *Infidelity*
and *Hypocrisy*. For in a just Estimate of
Things, there is no more Colour to reject
an Article of Faith, because mere Reason
could never have discover'd it, or perhaps
cannot conceive it fully, though it be re-
veal'd; than there is to dispute a divine
Command, because it requires such Mor-
tification, and Self-denial, as corrupt Na-
ture would never have made its voluntary
Choice, and perhaps can scarce be brought
to submit to, notwithstanding all the Obligations, Aids, and Encouragements of the
Gospel.

BUT he that considers the Nature of
Christianity aright, will find no Reason, or
Excuse for being so scrupulous in yielding
his Assent; or so partial in paying his O-
bedience, especially, if he weighs well the
Evidence,

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SERM. Evidence, upon which we ground our Belief and Adherence. Which was the

XIV.

Second Thing the judicious Hearer is to consider, in the Doctrine, and Precepts of *Christianity*, of which it may suffice to observe:

First, THAT their Evidence is as full and clear, as the Nature of Things will admit.

Secondly, THAT 'tis as much as is necessary, or convenient in such Matters.

First, THAT their Evidence is as full and clear, as the Nature of Things will admit.

It is an useful Remark of *Aristotle's*, "that all Things are not capable of the same Evidence, either in Kind, or Degree." And it argues no great Share of Skill, and Experience in the Man, that will sit down by no other than sensible Proof, or rigid Demonstration, be the Subject Matter what it will.

'Tis true, the Evidence of Sense is the most convincing of all other, where it may be had: But shall I therefore give Credit to nothing else, but what my Eyes, and Ears, and Hands convince me of?

Surely,

Surely, if that be the Consequence, the *Sadducees* were the best *Divines*, and *Hobbes* the best *Philosopher*. For we can have no sufficient Proof (it seems) of the Existence of immaterial Substances, Angel, Spirit, God or Devil.

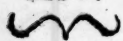
SERM.
XIV.

AGAIN, Reason is the Eye of the Mind, and Demonstration the strictest Sort of Reasoning; but shall I therefore yield my Assent to nothing, but what is demonstrably plain, or at least discoverable by mere dint of Reason, without any other Light or Information? Certainly nothing could be more wild, and extravagant than such a Conclusion. For I would fain know by what Strength of Argument, or Ratiocination, a Man might discover the secret Thoughts and Intentions, that are seal'd up in the Breast of another, if he thinks not fit to make them public? Or what Demonstration can make out the *ὅτι*, and *διότι*, of Matters of Fact; such as relate to Times, Places, Persons and Actions; if they be not confirm'd by the Testimonies of such, as have been curious in their Enquiries into the several Circumstances, and as faithful in their Relations?

To

S E R M.

XIV.

1 Cor. ii.
11.

To apply this therefore to the Matter in Hand; the *Miracles*, and other the *Credentials* of the *Christian* Religion, as Matters of Fact, must depend upon the Relation of those, that are competent, and unsuspected Witnesses in the Case, and the particular Doctrines, and Precepts of *Christianity*, as being Manifestations of the divine Nature, Counsel, and Will can be no otherwise prov'd, than by those Declarations and Publications, which God has made of them in holy Scripture. *For the Things of God knoweth no Man but the Spirit of God*; and those to whom they are reveal'd by his Spirit.

'Tis confess'd, there are some Degrees, and Pitches of Perfection requir'd in the *Gospel*, in which the dim Light of Nature gives us no Direction; and there are profound Mysteries there reveal'd, which all the Reason of Men, and Angels cannot penetrate.

BUT shall this invalidate the Authority, and Testimony of God? Or shall we dare to bring his Truth in Question, merely because these Things want that Sort of Proof, of which indeed they are incapable?

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ble? What? Shall we disbelieve the *Tri-* SERM.
XIV.
nity in Unity, because it cannot be made
out by the Doctrine of Triangles, and Cir-
cles, or because there is nothing analagous
to it in Nature? What? Shall we refuse
to *take up the Cross and follow Christ, love*
our Enemies, do good against Evil, and suf-
fer wrongfully for his Sake, because a
carnal Mind cannot so clearly see the mere
moral Obligation to these Duties? What?
Shall we deny that *great Mystery of Godliness,*
God manifest in the Flesh; because we can-
not understand the Manner of that admi-
rable Union? At this Rate we may be-
come eternal *Sceptics*, even in the most fa-
miliar Objects; and believe no such Thing
as Motion, Sensation, Continuity of the
Parts of Matter, Union of the Soul and
Body, &c. because these Things are ge-
nerally look'd upon as inexplicable. But
surely, that Man would render himself
justly ridiculous, that should thus renounce
his Sense and Experience, in pure Com-
pliment to his Understanding. And it
seems to be no great Argument either of
Judgment, or Sincerity in those Persons,
who are such fond *Adorers* of their own

Reason,

S E R M. Reason, when God interposes his Authority.
XIV.

BUT perhaps (will they say) there is no Body disputes the Authority of God, or questions the Truth of divine Revelation, provided it be clear and plain; but that Men should frame, and build Articles of Faith upon obscure, and ambiguous Places, and impose them when they have done, with the strictest Necessity: This it seems, is the Source of all their Doubts, and Scruples.

To which, I answer, that there is no one Article of the Catholick Faith, but what is clearly grounded upon Scripture, nor is a *Christian* oblig'd to the explicate Belief of any other. But having gratified them with this Concession, I expect that they also will answer this one Request of mine, (if it be but for the Truth, and their own Souls Sake) and that is, that they would not shut their Eyes against the *Mid-day Sun*, nor raise a Dust, on purpose to put them out.

FOR 'tis a known Practice, that the Men of Slight and Craft, can as well *pervert the other Scriptures*, as those that are
hard

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hard to be understood, to their own De-
struction. For instance, one would think,
that the Eternity, and Divinity of our Sa-
viour were plain beyond Contradiction,
from that Passage of St. *John*, *In the Be-* John i. 1.
ginning was the Word, and the Word was
with God, and the Word was God, &c.

SERM.
XIV.

BUT yet, there are subtle Reasoners who will tell you, that this were to the Purpose, if by the term *Word* could be meant nothing else but a pre-existing Person; and by the term *God*, nothing but God Almighty the Creator of Heaven and Earth; and if taking those Terms in those Senses, did not make St. *John* write Nonsense, which is the humble Opinion of one of Dr. *Wallis's* late Adversaries, dress'd up in his own modest Words. And indeed, this must be said of these Men, that rather than the *Evangelist* should be convicted of Nonsense, they are willing to take it upon themselves: For certainly nothing can be nearer akin to it, than those absurd Expositions of this Place (more than a few) which the *Socinians* have pleas'd themselves, and pester'd the World with.

AND

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SERM.

XIV.

AND to match this Instance with another in a Matter of Practice. A Man would be apt to conclude, if any Sin be condemn'd in Scripture, that Image-Worship is most expressly, and universally forbidden in the second Commandment. And yet there are some *infallible Christians* who know how to break this Commandment, with a Salvo to God's Honour and Authority; and render the Word of God of no Effect, by Distinctions of their own, and such fine Notions as will serve indeed to prove the *Heathens* no *Idolaters*.

BUT I hope all the World is not dark, because these Men are wilfully blind, nor is the Scripture ever the more difficult or obscure, because they are unwilling to understand it. For Perverseness is an incurable Disease of the Mind, that's Proof against all the Methods of Conviction. And therefore Dr. *Wallis* had Reason to mark the Disingenuity of the Man, that would not allow the first of St. *John* to be any Argument for our *Saviour's* Divinity, unless it had been impossible to fix any other Meaning upon the Words. For we may learn from the Examples already given,

given, that there can be no Words so full SERM.
and exprefs, but with a little Subtlety and XIV.
a great deal of Violence, may be wrested
to some other unnatural Sense; or (if that
will serve the Cause as well) be cry'd down
for Nonsense. So that I think we may
safely conclude, in Spight of these, and
all other Objections; that the Doctrines,
and Precepts of *Christianity*, have all the
Evidence, that either the Nature of the
Things themselves, or the Use of Words
will bear. But

Secondly, As they have all the Evidence,
of which in their Kind they are capable;
so they have all that was either necessary,
or convenient.

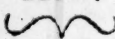
ALL that was necessary (to be sure) they
have, because that which they have is suf-
ficiently convincing to a Mind, that is
rightly inform'd, and well dispos'd. Nor
is it convenient they should have more,
when what they have already is sufficient.
For what Remedy can there be left in
Store for such contumacious, and unrea-
sonable Men, as tempt the Lord their God?
If they slight the ordinary Means of Con-
viction, if they hear not *Moses*, nor the
VOL. III. C c *Prophets*,

SERM. *Prophets, nor Apostles, neither would they*
 XIV. *believe, or repent, though one should rise*
from the Dead, or an Angel should come
from Heaven? Because they have the same
Lusts, Interests, and Prejudices to oppose
the latter, as the former. And indeed,
they of all Men, have the least Reason to
expect such extraordinary Favours. For
those that admire not the Splendor, and
the Beauty of the Sun, deserve not the
Use of their Eyes: And a Neglect, or A-
buse of Grace, is a just Forfeiture of the
Gift. And accordingly we see, 'tis fre-
quent for the divine Justice, to punish this
Sin by itself, that is, by a greater Degree
of Induration, and the Spirit of Slumber
upon their Eyelids, that seeing they should
see, and not perceive; and hearing they should
bear, and should not understand.

BUT moreover, as the *ὑπο ἀπειθείας*, the
 Children of Unbelief and Disobedience,
 can upon no Pretence expect any brighter
 Illuminations: So neither is it proper, that
 Matters of Faith, and Religion should be
 propounded in the demonstrative Way, or
 with such cogent Evidence, as at once to
 extort our Assent and Compliance. For

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It adds to the Price, and Character both SERM.
of our Faith and Obedience, that they are XIV.
suppos'd to proceed from a voluntary Sub-
mission of our Reason, Will, and Affe-
ctions to the sacred Word, and Will of
God. And it would no longer be a Vir-
tue either to believe, or to obey; if it
were once made a Matter, not of Choice,
but Necessity. Nor would there be any
Ground for future Rewards and Punish-
ments, if the Freedom of those very Ac-
tions, that are to be rewarded or punish-
ed, were over-rul'd by a necessary Deter-
mination. And 'tis therefore the Wisdom,
as well as the Goodness of God; that the
Doctrines, and Precepts of *Christianity*, are
propos'd in such a Manner, as to try the
Ingenuity of Men's Tempers, and the
Goodness of their Dispositions. Though
at the same Time they are left without
Excuse for their *Infidelity*, and Disobe-
dience. And for the Reasons already giv-
en, if we should suppose them capable of
more Evidence, than already they have;
yet more was neither necessary, nor con-
venient.


 THE *Third Thing* which deserves the attentive Hearers more especial Consideration, is the Importance of the Doctrines, and Precepts of *Christianity*. For 'tis the Importance of any thing that makes it indeed considerable, and 'tis the particular Concern that I have in it, which makes it considerable to me. If it imports me Good, I am concern'd to secure that Good to myself, if Evil to avoid the Evil. And if that Evil or Good be suspended, upon certain Conditions, it behoves me to see to the Performance of those Conditions, that so I may effectually obtain the one, and avoid the other. Now if we examine the *Credenda* and *Agenda* of our holy Religion, by these Rules; we shall find, that they are of such large Extent, that all Mankind are equally concern'd in them, because *all have sinned, and come short of the Glory of God*. Nor is there any Hope of Access to him, but by Faith in *Jesus Christ*; *which Faith worketh by Love, and that Love is the fulfilling of the Law*. And as they are of universal Concernment, so they import no less than the greatest Good or Evil, of which humane Nature is capable;

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to wit their everlasting Happiness or Mi-^{SERM.}
 sery. Happiness, as the exceeding great ^{XIV.}
 Reward of a steady, persevering Faith, and
 sincere Obedience, which is all that God
 requires of us; and in Default of these,
 Misery, as the just Demerit of *Infidelity*
 and *Hypocrisy*. And that these are the
 Conditions requir'd at our Hands, and
 these the Consequences of our Performance
 or Neglect; is abundantly confirm'd by
 holy Scripture. *For without Faith 'tis im-* ^{Heb. xi. 6.}
possible to please God, and without Holiness ^{Heb. xii.}
no Man shall see the Lord, says the Apostle. ^{19.}
 And *Christ* himself by the *Evangelist*, as-
 sures us; that *he that believeth, and is bap-*
tiz'd shall be sav'd, but he that believeth ^{Mark xvi.}
not, shall be damn'd. And in another ^{16.}
 Place, the *Wicked shall go away into ever-* ^{Matth.}
lasting Punishment, but the Righteous into ^{xxv. 8 ult.}
Life eternal. If therefore extreme Hap-
 piness or Misery, has any Influence upon
 our Hopes and Fears; and if Eternity add
 ought to the Weight of either; and if there
 be no middle State, but one of these two
 must be the Reward of all the Sons of
 Men; then certainly the Doctrines, and
 Precepts of *Christ*, which if heartily be-
 liev'd

SERM.

XIV.

liev'd and embrac'd, *are able to make us wise unto Salvation*, must be of the vastest Moment and Importance, and deserve proportionably of our Esteem, and Consideration. But I shall not spend Words to illustrate that, which no sober *Christian* will deny; I shall rather chuse to observe from hence, (though 'tis a melancholy Observation) how blasphemously those Men make a wide Mouth, and sport themselves against God, who are ever starting unreasonable Scruples in Matters of Faith; and love to put the puzzling Question, how can this be conceiv'd? How is it possible? Or if there be nothing else to be objected, is it not possible it may be otherwise? Surely these *Wretches* never consider'd, how dangerous it is to trifle with God, and their own Souls, in Things of such mighty Consequence: If they did, methinks it would make them more serious, and put them in Mind, how *that God is true, and every Man a Lyar*; that he is infinite, and we finite, that he best understands his own Nature, Counsel, and Will; and that we can know no more of him, than our imperfect State will admit, and he himself

has

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has been pleas'd to discover; and that S E R M.
whatsoever is so discover'd, is propos'd to XIV.
our Belief upon Pain of Damnation. And
if these Things were well weigh'd, with a
steady, and impartial Hand, it would ap-
pear to be their Duty, and their Safety
too, *to trust in the Lord with all their* Prov. iii.
Heart, and not to lean to their own Under- 5.
standing; and to think soberly, according as Rom. xii.
God hath dealt to every Man the Measure 3.
of Faith, rather than to break through unto Exo l. xix.
the Lord, to gaze, and to perish. 21.

BUT it is not to be forgotten the mean
while, that there is a Hell for the impe-
nitent *Believer*, as well as for the *scepti-*
cal Unbeliever.

AND it would make one tremble to
think, how madly those Men dance upon
the Brink of the Precipice; who can shuf-
fle off some positive Duty, or foster some
darling Sin in their Bosom; and salve their
own Consciences all the while, with some
healing Distinctions and Limitations, which
the Scripture no where allows or approves.
Wretched Hopes! that Men should thus
deceive themselves, whilst they think to
mock God. Did they ever consider that

SERM.

XIV.

he is our Sovereign Lord and Maker, we his Vassals and Creatures? *And that all Things are naked to the Eyes of him with whom we have to do?* Did they ever consider that our Law-giver is *able to save or destroy*; and that he will accept of nothing less than a sincere, and entire Obedience to all his Laws; without any Reserve to our most beloved Lusts, and dearest Interests? Did they ever consider, that he has *set Life and Death before us*, that we are *Probationers for Eternity*; and that our future Condition must depend wholly, and solely upon our present Conduct. Certainly one would think, if these momentous Truths were seriously laid to Heart, it would be a great Restraint upon Vice, and no less Discouragement to that self Flattery, and *Hypocrisy* that is so common in the World: Unless Men could be so fond, as to think, that the perishing Goods, and light Afflictions of this Life, are sufficient to be weigh'd in the Ballance, against *that Weight of Glory, which is the Inheritance of the Saints in Light*: And that unsupportable Torment which shall be the Portion of *Hypocrites and Unbelievers in outer Darkness.*

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Darkness. And thus I have presented to SERM.
your View the vast Importance of the Do- XIV.
ctrines, and Precepts of *Christianity*, to-
gether with those weighty Considerations
which naturally flow from them, which
was the *third* and *last* Thing considera-
ble.

Now to God the Father, &c.



S E R M O N

Of the same kind as the first, but with a different

arrangement of the parts, and a different

number of the various parts, and a different

arrangement of the parts, and a different

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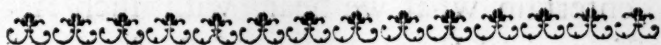
arrangement of the parts, and a different

number of the various parts, and a different

arrangement of the parts, and a different



S E R M O N XV.



M A R K iv. 24.

*And he said unto them, take heed
what you hear.*

Parall. L U K E viii. 18.

Take heed therefore how ye hear.



IN discoursing upon these Words, S E R M.
I proposed to make good the XV.
two following Particulars: ~~~~~

I. *First*, THAT we ought to take heed,
that is, duly and impartially to weigh, and
consider the Doctrines, and Precepts of
Christianity,

SERM. *Christianity*, such as may be proved from
 XV. the Scriptures, and to beware of the contrary. To which I have fully spoken.
 I proceed

II. To the *Second* general Proposition rais'd from the Text, collated with the parallel Place in St. *Luke* viii. 18. *Take heed how ye hear*, *πῶς ἀκούετε*, which implies, that we ought to be cautious, and careful to entertain what we hear, with such Affections, and Preparations of Soul, as are suitable to such sacred, and weighty Matters, lest the Seed sown should prove unfruitful through any Indisposition on our Parts. The Reason or Necessity of which Caution, I think, I need not go about to make plainer than it is. For that Man must have but a very slender Acquaintance either with himself, or humane Nature in general; who has not had Occasion to observe, how different the Impression, Influence, Success, and Improvement of the Word preach'd is, according as the Hearer is differently affected, or dispos'd. Sometimes the strongest, and the clearest Reasoning, the finest Address and Persuasion, shall lose their wonted Charms and Efficacy;

cacy; which at other Times would have wrought a powerful Conviction in us, and melted us into *Tears of Repentance*. Sometimes the Remedy itself (though never so skilfully applied, and with the nicest Hand) feeds, and enrages the Distemper.

S E R M.
XV.
~~~~~

NAY, there is a Time, when a *Prophet*, an *Apostle*, an *Angel* from *Heaven*, with all the *Plagues*, and Wonders of *Egypt* in his Commission, might speak in vain to an obdurate Sinner. Whereas take the same Person in another Mood, and a *Hand-writing upon the Wall*, or a secret Rebuke from his own Conscience, shall at once awaken, and astonish him. So fickle, so unaccountable is Man! And so unlike himself; that it requires no less Art, and Skill to address him seasonably than successfully!

IN short, our Edification, and Improvement under the Dispensation of God's Word, depends so much upon the present Frame, and Temper of our Souls; that 'tis like the Soil to the Seed, which if it be not kindly in itself, all the Care, and Cultivation in the World, will never make it answer the Tiller's Hopes, nor reward



SERM. his Labour. And therefore our *blessed Sa-*

XV.

Luke viii.  
8.

*viour, who knew what was in Man,* concludes the *Parable of the Sower*, (as he does some other of his heavenly Discourses) with this pertinent, and useful Application, *He that hath Ears to hear, let him hear;* intimating, that all Men are not alike dispos'd for the Reception of the Word; and that there is a Deafness, (the more dangerous indeed of the two) which affects not only the outward Ears, but the Understanding, and the Will; and renders Men incredulous, obstinate, and incorrigible. And truly, if we reflect upon the Ignorance, and *Infidelity* of some; the Pride, and Prejudice of others; the Partiality, and Hypocrisy of most; it can be no Breach of Charity, to wish at least, that the Generality of *Hearers* were not too much possess'd with this Spirit of Deafness. Left therefore these evil Habits should fix, and spread their Roots in our Hearts; and so choak the Growth of the Word, and blast its Fruits e'er they come to Perfection: It will concern us to enquire, what those Dispositions of Soul are, which will qualify us to hear in such a Manner, as may be

be most acceptable to God, most suitable S E R M.  
to the Character of our spiritual Guides, and XV.  
most advantageous to ourselves. *First* then,  
that we may approve ourselves to God (in  
whose Sight we are, and whose Word it  
is) the two principal Qualifications are  
Reverence and Faith. And *First*, Reve-  
rence, by which I mean an awful, and in-  
genuous Regard towards God, mix'd up  
with Fear, and Love, and Admiration; in  
Respect of his Greatness and Goodness,  
his Purity and Justice, his infinite Know-  
ledge, and infinite Presence, and his more  
especial, and peculiar Presence in the midst  
of those religious Assemblies, which are  
gather'd together in his Name.

FOR certainly, if we have any due Ap-  
prehensions of these adorable Perfections,  
we must needs be possess'd with the high-  
est Veneration of the divine Nature, which  
will strangely compose, and regulate, as well  
our inmost Thoughts and Desires, as our  
outward Deportment and Frame, the whole  
Man, Soul and Body, into such a Posture,  
as may best become the sacred, and solemn  
Business of Religion; whether we approach  
the Throne of Heaven, as humble Suitors  
for

SERMON. for Grace and Mercy; or whether we sit  
 XV. meekly at the Foot-stool, listening for Instruction. 'Tis *this* that will make us serious, devout, humble, and cautious of the least Offence against the *dread Majesty of Heaven and Earth*. For how can mortal Man (the Workmanship of God) or how can sinful Man (vile *Apostate* as he is) appear before his great Creator, and his Judge, without the lowest Submission, and the profoundest Sense of his own Unworthiness, and the obnoxious guilty Fears of future Vengeance? 'Tis that will fix our Attention, and quicken our Obedience; for shall the good God afford us his Light, and his Truth for our Direction; and we contemptuously turn our Backs upon Him? Shall he out of pure Condescension, enter as it were upon Treaty with us, and reason, expostulate, appeal, exhort, persuade, and all to no Purpose? Shall he institute an Order of Men, to be subservient to his Grace, in the Ministry of Reconciliation? Shall he empower them to explain, enforce, inculcate, and apply his holy Word, to the several Cases and Consciences, and Wills of Men, and to lead mistaken, wandring,

wandering, vain, and heedless Souls in the SERM.  
Way everlasting? 'Surely, if these Charms XV.  
of Love and Goodness, these endearing  
Methods of Grace won't make us atten-  
tive and obsequious, 'tis because we are  
not only ungrateful, but stupid, deaf, and  
senseless as the Rocks. 'Tis this that will  
sequester us from the World, and worldly  
Cares, and fill us with pious Thoughts,  
and heavenly Aspirations; unless we dare  
come before that God, who is of *purser*  
*Eyes than to behold Iniquity*, with our im-  
pure Lusts, carnal Desires, and Imagina-  
tions about us. 'Tis this that will make  
us purify our double Hearts, and cleanse  
ourselves from all the base Alloys of Hy-  
pocrisy: For if we be in the immediate  
Presence of God, and his holy Angels; if  
he be our Judge, and they his Witnesses  
against us; if *he searcheth the Heart, and*  
*trieth the Reins, to render to every Man ac-*  
*cording to his Ways, and to the Fruit of his*  
*Doings*: If all this be true, and if the Belief  
of it has any Awe, or Influence upon us;  
then certainly this Time, and Place of all  
others is the most improper to dissemble  
in. To summ up all, in a few Words;



SERM. *Reverence* is the very Life, and Soul of all

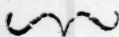
XV. Devotion: 'Tis that, which decks Religion itself with a sort of venerable Beauty and Comeliness, makes its Offices grave, decent and solemn, and by Consequence so much the more impressive upon the Minds of Men, and so much the more suitable to the Majesty of God. Reverence does add a kind of Solemnity, and Sanctity to the most common Actions; *so that whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do* if we refer it (as we ought) to the *Glory of God*, it becomes in some Sense a piece of Religion. Whereas on the contrary, *Irreverence* defecrates, and profanes all that is holy. It turns the Church into a *Theatre*, the Pulpit into a *Rostrum*, Preaching into *Haranguing*, and Prayer into mere *Battology*: In a word, it renders the whole a formal piece of Mockery, and the publick Worship of God no better than a publick Affront. Hence is it that so many hunger, and thirst after Preaching, who have no Manner of Relish for the Prayers. Hence is it, that others frequent the House of God as Spectators, rather than Auditors; whilst others again bring *itching Ears* along

*Of hearing the Word profitably.* 403

along with Them, and make the Sermon <sup>SERM.</sup>  
purely an Entertainment to their Fancy <sup>XV.</sup>  
and Curiosity; or perhaps a Subject to ex-  
ercise their Wit and Criticism upon, if  
not their Mirth and Raillery. Hence are  
the Eyes of some seal'd up with care-  
less Sleep, whilst others are rowling a-  
bout with a giddy Wantonness. Hence  
is that Slovenliness of Behaviour, which  
is too observable among the Vulgar, and  
that eager Impatience to be gone, even  
though they go away unblest. Now, if  
we would effectually correct these Disor-  
ders and Indecencies; we ought to make  
ourselves thoroughly sensible of the tremen-  
dous Presence of God, and of those other  
lovely Attributes of his, which do justly  
challenge our highest Regard and Venera-  
tion: That so we may come with all Read-  
iness, and Submission *to receive the Word*  
*in Faith*, as good *Cornelius* once did, when  
he said to *St. Peter*, *Now are we all here* <sup>Acts x. 33.</sup>  
*present before God, to hear all Things, that*  
*are commanded thee of God*, i. e. (as we  
may reasonably understand them) so to  
hear, as to believe, and embrace the Chri-  
stian Religion. For

SERM.

XV.

1 Ep. v.  
10.

THE *Second* Qualification requir'd in the well dispos'd Hearer, is *Faith*, which is no less requisite than the other, to make his Attendance upon the Word acceptable in the Sight of God. Nor can we indeed revere him as we ought, unless we believe him too: For (as St. *John* says) *He that believeth not God, hath made him a Liar*, which surely cannot favour of any great Reverence towards him. As therefore the divine Omniscience, Omnipresence, Greatness, Goodness, &c. are the just Foundation of our Reverence; so is his Veracity the sure Ground of our Faith, and we are oblig'd to believe him, if we acknowledge, and adore this among the Rest of his Perfections.

Eph. i.  
14.

AND that we might not be deluded by our own superstitious Fancies, *and carried about with every Wind of Doctrine*, he has left us a standing, and unalterable Rule of Faith, which is his Truth reveal'd in holy Scripture, and consisting of these four principal Parts: *First*, The Affirmations of Scripture, *Historical* or *Doctrinal*. *Secondly*, The Commands of God and *Christ*, especially those sublime Precepts of *Christian*

*ſian* Virtue deliver'd in the Sermon upon the Mount. *Thirdly*, The Promiſes, peculiarly thoſe upon which the Hopes of future Happineſs are founded. *Fourthly*, The Threats, eſpecially *theſe Terrors of the Lord*, which denounce eternal Vengeance againſt impenitent Sinners.

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AND whatſoever is reducible to theſe Heads, is either expreſly reveal'd in Scripture, or by neceſſary Implication there contain'd; and all this entirely taken together is the adequate Object of our Faith. Nor is it to be thought any Injury to the Word of God, or any unreaſonable Impoſition upon Men, to require their Belief of ſuch Things, as are not in expreſs, and categorical Terms deliver'd in holy Writ. For the Senſe of the Scripture, is the Scripture; and if that be once ſecur'd, there can be no Danger of Error or Innovation: Whereas it is ſometimes highly expedient to vary from Scripture Expreſſions, that we may the better do Juſtice to the Senſe; when it is either ignorantly miſtaken, maliciously diſtorted and perverted, or impudently deny'd; which are all of them Caſes that are not without



SERM. Example. This then being the compleat  
XV. Object of our Faith, taken in its just, and  
necessary Extent; it is requisite, that our  
Faith should be in every Point, commensurate to its Object. And therefore the well dispos'd Hearer, is oblig'd to believe, and embrace all those wise, and wonderful Truths, which are either expressly, or virtually contain'd in holy Scripture; but above all, those that are Matter of pure Revelation, which are too sublime to be *kenn'd* by the naked Eye of Reason, too vast for humane Comprehension. For 'tis the Crown, the Glory of our Faith, and indeed the noblest, and most exalted Act of Reason too, thus to abase itself in the Sight of God; to whom the greatest Honour we can do, is to believe him upon his sole Testimony, without any other concurring Evidence whatsoever; nay, when the very Manner of the Thing (if not the very Possibility) seems to us inconceivable. In like manner, we are bound to assent to the Truth, and Goodness of all the divine Commands, and to apply them to ourselves, as the *straitest* Rules of Life, especially to signalize our  
Obedience,

*Of hearing the Word profitably.*

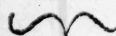
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Obedience, by the conscientious Practice S E R M.  
of those, which are against the Grain of XV.  
corrupt Nature, and most distasteful to  
Flesh and Blood; for the greater the Difficulty, the greater the Excellency; and a *Christian* gives the most honourable Proof of his Courage, as well as Sincerity, when he denies himself, to obey his God. Again, *Thirdly*, We are under an equal Obligation to rely firmly upon the Promises; *for he is faithful who hath promis'd*, nor can they fail, unless we ourselves be wanting to our own Happiness, by our Non-Performance of the Conditions requir'd; although at the same Time it must be confess'd, that the Consummation of Glory is something more than we are able to conceive, or the holy *Angels* themselves express, who have always been in the blessed State of Vision and Fruition.

*Lastly*, THE Threats of Vengeance, do equally exercise our Faith, in discerning God's Justice in its Severity, that so we may forsake our Sins, to whose Demerit they are justly due, and that God may be glorified in our Salvation, not Destruction. These, these are the Things which the *Christian*

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XV.



Hearer is always bound to believe; to believe, not with the bare Assent of the Understanding, but with the full, and free Consent and Approbation of his Will: That so being embrac'd by the two superior Faculties of the Soul, their Operation may be more lively and powerful, upon the Affections, Appetites, and all the animal Powers; and their Effects more constant, and visible in the Regulation of Men's Lives and Manners. And whensoever any Thing of this Nature is propos'd to our Belief, or applied to our Practice, by our lawful Pastor; we are to receive it with all Readiness of Mind, and Meekness, and that Deference, which is justly due to the *Oracles of God*. Not that he can assume any Thing to himself, or claim any Dominion over your Faith: But forasmuch as he speaks in the Name of God, and by his Authority, so far as he keeps within the Bounds of his Commission; so far as he *prophecies* according to the Proportion of Faith; that is, agreeably to Scripture, which is the unerring Rule of it; so far is his Doctrine to be receiv'd, not as *the Word of Men, but, as it is in Truth, the Word*

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Word of God, which worketh effectually in them that believe. SERM.  
XV.

'Tis true, God makes use of the Ministry of Men, in dispensing his holy Mysteries, but nevertheless the heavenly Treasures lose nothing of their Credit, altho' they are convey'd to us in *earthen Vessels*. So far from that, that even the *Vessels* themselves which are consecrated to this Use, are justly esteem'd *worthy of double Honour*; in Virtue of their Relation to God. And therefore that the faithful, and reverent Hearer, may not be wanting, in any material Point of his Duty; I shall from hence proceed to the *Second Enquiry*, *i. e.* how he ought to demean, and acquit himself towards those, *who labour in the Word and Doctrine*, and this ought to be, with *Humility and Discretion*. And

*First*, HUMILITY, which implies at once, a lowly Opinion of a Man's self, and reverent Esteem of his Minister. And this is indeed the *Seed-plot* of all Virtue, and the very Foundation of all good Improvement; 'tis that which renders Men teachable and governable, swift to hear, and willing both to learn, and to obey, and modestly



SERM. modestly submissive to their spiritual Pa-  
 XV. stors, and Governours; whereas he, that  
 is fondly puff'd up with a high Conceit  
 of his own Sanctity, and Knowledge, his  
 Abilities and Perfections; that Man is in  
 his own Eyes, too wise to be instructed,  
 too good to be reform'd. And let the  
 Man of God (as becomes his Place) speak,  
*exhort, rebuke with all Authority*; yet he  
 even in Defiance of the *Apostle*, shall de-  
 spise him; and perhaps cry down his Of-  
 fice too, as an arrogant Usurpation. For  
 we know it was once said with a great  
 deal of Indignation, *Ye take too much upon*  
*you, seeing all the Congregation are holy,*  
*every one of them, and the Lord is among*  
*them, wherefore then lift ye up yourselves*  
*above the Congregation of the Lord?* And  
 there are not wanting in this licentious  
 Age, who do as much disdain to be *Priest-*  
*ridden* (as the Word of Reproach is) as  
 even *Corah, Dathan and Abiram* did; that  
 is, they entertain such mean Thoughts  
 both of the *Priesthood* itself, and those that  
 are devoted to it; that they count it a Di-  
 minution to themselves, to submit to their  
 Guidance; which Thing is at once, the  
 greatest

Numb.  
 xvi. 3.

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greatest Injury to their own Souls, and the SERM.  
most insolent Affront to Almighty God: XV.

~  
'Tis the greatest Injury to their own Souls, because they do thereby totally deprive themselves of the Benefit of the Ministry, and that wholesome Doctrine, those grave Reprehensions, and that ghostly Advice; which might otherwise be very conducive to their Salvation. For if the Man be set light by, his Words will scarce be allow'd their just Weight; if the Preacher be despis'd, no Wonder, if the Sermon be little regarded. But then these Despisers ought to consider, that this Contempt of theirs flies in the Face of God himself. For the Men whom they despise, are the Ministers of God, *the Stewards of his manifold Grace, Ambassadors for Christ*, those that are commission'd to feed his Flock, and that are entrusted with the weighty Care of Men's immortal Souls; and in order to this great Work, are vested with such an Authority, as no earthly Power can confer. In short, their Station is so honourable, their Character so high and sacred, and their Relation so near to God; that whatsoever Indignity is offer'd either to their Office, or  
their

S E R M. their Persons for their Office Sake: He re-

XV. sents it as done to himself. *For he that*  
 Luke x. 16. *despiseth you, despiseth me, saith our blessed*

*Saviour.* And methinks, this should be enough not only to shelter them from

Contempt, but to conciliate a Reverence to the Function; and derive an Authority

upon all that they do, pursuant to their heavenly Mission and Commission. For

(to use the Words of the learned *Hooker*)

“ Forasmuch as the *Holy Ghost*, which our

“ *Saviour* in his first Ordinations gave,

“ doth no less concur with spiritual Vo-

“ cations, throughout all Ages; than the

“ Spirit, which God deriv’d from *Moses* to

“ them that assisted him in his Govern-

“ ment, did descend from them to their

“ Successors, in like Authority and Place:

“ We have for the least, and meanest Du-

“ ties perform’d by Virtue of ministerial

“ Power, *that* to dignify, grace, and au-

“ thorize them, which no other Offices

“ on Earth can challenge: And whether

“ we preach, pray, baptize, communi-

“ cate, condemn, absolve, or whatsoever

“ as Disposers of God’s Mysteries, our

“ Words, Judgments, Acts, and Deeds

“ are

*Of hearing the Word profitably.*

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"are not ours, but the Holy Ghost's." And S E R M. XV.  
(I may add) as such they are to be esteem'd; unless we will do *Despight against the Spirit of Grace*. Not that we ascribe the same incontestable Authority, to all that the Preacher says and does; as if it were the immediate Act of God himself. No; an implicit Faith, and blind Obedience best becomes that *Church*, where the very Terms of Communion oblige Men to renounce their Sense and Reason. *Despise not Prophecy* is indeed an *Apostolick Rule*, 1 Thess. v. 20. but then we are enjoin'd by the *Apostle* in the self-same Place, to *prove all Things*, Ver. 21. *and to hold fast that only which is good.*

So that whilst we deny not that Honour to the *Prophet*, which is his Due, as being the Messenger of God, and perhaps a Man of extraordinary Gifts and Attainments: We are still to remember, that he is but a Man, and therefore not free from Error; which is the natural Offspring of humane Frailty. Lest therefore our Humility should be too abject, and betray us into a stupid, and slavish Credulity, there is another necessary Qualification in the humble Hearer, and that is,



SERM.

XV.

*Secondly, Discretion.* For a Judgment of Discretion is not only allow'd, but requir'd by our indulgent Mother the *Church of England*; who treats us like Men, backing our Authority with Reason; and drives us not like Beasts in a common Herd, by the Noise of that swelling Word *Infallibility*. So far from that, that our Guides themselves are under Direction, the Power which they exercise is but a delegated Power; and therefore must be suppos'd, not only to depend upon the Authority, but to be regulated by the Will of the great God, whose Delegates they are. And whatsoever they presume to teach, ought always to be pursuant to those divine Instructions, which they themselves have receiv'd; which whether it be so or not is incumbent upon the Hearer (to the best of his Capacity) to judge; and in this his Judgment, he is to be directed by the holy Scripture, which is the distinguishing Touchstone, both of our Doctrine, and your Belief. And if any Man shall offer to advance any unsound, or novel Opinion of his own, contrary to the written Word, or shall feloniously suppress, or maliciously  
pervert

*Of bearing the Word profitably.* 415

pervert any of the sacred Truths there re-<sup>SERM.</sup>  
veal'd, and ye encourage the *Impostor* by <sup>XV.</sup>  
an easy Credulity; I do pronounce in the  
Words of the Apostle, that *his Preaching* <sup>1 Cor. xv.</sup>  
*is vain, and your Faith also vain*; the one <sup>14.</sup>

as weak and unauthoritative, the other, as  
groundless and irrational. For there is no  
Authority, no Reason that can be of any  
Validity, but what has its Foundation in  
holy Scripture: And thither therefore our  
*blessed Saviour* frequently makes his Ap-  
peal; and notwithstanding the living Te-  
stimony of St. *John*, and his miraculous  
Credentials, under the Signet of Almighty  
Power; yet he submits his Cause to God's  
Word, and puts himself upon the Judg-  
ment, and Ingenuity of his Hearers in the  
Enquiry; *search the Scriptures* (says he) <sup>Jo. v. 39.</sup>  
*for in them ye think ye have eternal Life, and*  
*they are they which testify of me.* And in-  
deed, to make an impartial Research into  
the Truth of Things, and to compare them  
with the original Records of Scripture;  
will require a competent Share of Judg-  
ment, and Ingenuity, both which taken  
together, seem to compleat the Character  
of the *noble Bereans*, who merited that  
Title

SERM. Title of the sacred *Historian*, in that *they*

XV. *receiv'd the Word of God with all Readiness*

Acts xvii. *of Mind, and search'd the Scriptures*

11. *daily, whether those Things were so. So*

that it should seem, although they were of an ingenuous, and docible Disposition; yet they were far enough from being rashly credulous; and on the other Hand, tho' they were naturally inquisitive, yet they were judicious, sober, and easy to be persuaded.

AND this is the just Mean that ought always to be observ'd by those, who *take heed how they hear*. 'Tis requisite indeed, that their *Humility* should be govern'd by Discretion, but then their Discretion ought likewise to be temper'd with *Humility*: It becomes them to judge for themselves as Men, and rational Creatures; but then they should judge like Men, that is, rationally, and not abuse a Privilege. It is their Duty *to prove all Things*, but then they are equally oblig'd *to hold fast that which is sound and good*; admitting such Proof as is sufficient, and not insisting upon that, which is either impertinent or impossible. In a word, it is both

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both commendable, and necessary to search S E R M. XV.  
the Scriptures (as the *Beræans* did) but they must receive them too, with all Readiness of Mind, and believe them even in those Things that are hardest to be understood.

BUT here it may possibly be ask'd me, how Discretion can be made a necessary Qualification, in order to *bearing of the Word*? Whereas there are some so *illiterate*, that they are not capable so much as to consult the Rule; and others so injudicious, that they know not how to apply it as they ought.

To the *First* I answer, that tho' they be no Men of Letters themselves, yet they have the happy Opportunity of hearing the lively Oracles of God's Word read weekly, if not oftner in our public Churches; for their Edification.

To the *Second*, I reply, that although they be not furnish'd with any great depth of Judgment, yet that the Scripture is so clear in necessary Matters, *that the way-faring Men, though Fools, shall not err there-* II. xxxv. 8.

*in.* And to both, that it has been of old the pious Care of the Church, to collect



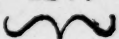
SERM

XV.

a found Form of Words out of holy Scripture, and digest them into a *Creed*, as a Help to their Infirmities: And that all the fundamental Points of the *Christian Religion* are contriv'd in the *Church Catechism*, into Questions and Answers succinct and plain, and such as with a little Diligence can be no Burthen to the weakest Memory: And that this they ought faithfully to adhere to, and make it a kind of secondary Rule (in Subordination to the Scripture) whereby to judge of the Preacher's Doctrine. And let them know further for their Comfort, that the merciful God will not require much, where he has given but little, nor will he rigidly exact an Account of Talents never committed to their Trust: Provided in the mean Time, that they improve those Means, and live up to that Measure of Faith and Knowledge, which he has afforded them. In Proportion to which, it will be requir'd, that they also judge for themselves, that is, modestly and humbly, as becomes the Scantiness of this Knowledge.

FOR Humility is what we all owe to the Preacher, as the Minister of God: And

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Discretion is what we owe to ourselves, as SERM.  
Men, and the Minister pretends to be no XV.  
more. 

AND now that the Person that is competently qualified with these previous Dispositions of Soul, may not after all prove an *unprofitable Hearer*, through some other Defect or Miscarriage: It remains in the *third* and *last* Place, that we enquire how, and in what Manner, we may so *bear the Word*, as that it may be advantageous to ourselves; which is indeed the very End, and Design of the Institution.

FOR God did not appoint the *Stewards of his Mysteries*, merely out of Ostentation of his own Wisdom or Power, but for our Improvement in all spiritual Knowledge, and godly Living: That Men might not be *forgetful Hearers*, but *Doers of his Word*, and be blessed in their Deeds. And that there may be an answerable Improvement under these gracious Means, which God in his Mercy has assign'd us: There are two Things most especially, and indeed indispensably requir'd of the heedful Hearer, *viz.*

SERM.

XV.

*First*, AN impartial Application of what is said, every Man to his own particular Case and Circumstances.

*Secondly*, A PRESENT and speedy, but withal a steddy Resolution of practising what he hears.

The *First* Thing requir'd, is an impartial Application of what is said, every Man to his own particular Case and Circumstances. For this is the great Disadvantage of public, and popular Discourses; that That is lost or neglected many Times in particular, which is commended to the Regard of all in common, and perhaps not through any Defect of the Discourse itself (which 'tis possible, observing the Rules of Decorum, could not be more particularly circumstantiated than it was) but through the Blindness, Inadvertency, Partiality, and Hypocrisy of the *Hearer*. For *there* lies all the Fault; and whilst it does so, Preaching is indeed but Impertinence spun out by the Hour-Glass; and *Hearing* a most unprofitable Business, or rather a graver Sort of Idleness. For a Discourse, though never so pertinent in itself, is really impertinent, and insignificant to that Man, who

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who neither regards it, nor applies it, nor perhaps so much as observes how it affects his own private Circumstances. SERM.  
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AND to such a Man as this, the Preacher may spend his Lungs, and stretch his Sides in vain: For were he furnish'd with all the Judgment, and Exactness of a *Sander-son*, the Easiness, and Address of a *Tillotson*, the Acuteness, and Clearness of a *Sherlock*; nay, were he a *Paul*, or one of the *Sons of Thunder*; this Man shall sit under him, drowsy and unaffected; and rise up never a whit the better, or the wiser. Should he lay down his Doctrine never so plainly, and state Matters never so nicely, and should he instance in all the Particularities imaginable; yet this Man shall still think himself unconcern'd, or at least not list to think otherwise. Should he portray Virtue in all its Beauty, and Heaven in all its Glory; should he paint Vice in all its Ugliness, and Hell in all its Horror; should he apply all the Gospel Promises and Threats, to every Duty there commanded, and every Sin there forbidden; yet this would produce neither Love, Joy, Hope, nor Fear, Sorrow or Repen-

E e 3

tance;



SERM. tance; nor fasten any other good Impres-  
 XV. sion upon so heedless, and unthinking a  
 ~~~~~ Soul as this.

FOR after all, the Preacher is neither a *Searcher*, nor a Ruler of *Hearts*, nor does the Spirit of God itself (though its Influence be very powerful) work without some Sort of Co-operation of the Spirit of Man, which is in him. And therefore Man ought to be so kind and faithful to himself, and so far concurring with the Means of Grace; as to apply the Doctrine which he hears, to his own private Conscience, and to examine his own Heart, whether or no he has exemplified that Duty in his Practice, which he can't but approve in Theory: And whether he has avoided that Sin in Conversation, which he can't but loath in its bare Description. And then he ought to consider, what Reason he has to expect or dread the Rewards or Punishments annex'd to either: And from hence again to take his Measures for the future Regulation of Life, either by *ceasing to do Evil*, and repenting of what he has done amiss, or by *learning to do well*, and persevering in it. And this is
 what

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what is absolutely requir'd of the heedful SERM.
Hearer, who, if he will but turn his Eyes XV.
inwards, must need be best acquainted
with the State of his own Soul. But then,
as this Self-Examination, and particular
Application are simply necessary to the Use
of edifying; so

Secondly, It is as necessary, that it should
be exact, severe and impartial. For if it
be done superficially and carelessly, or if
Men play the *Sophisters* with themselves,
and use Artifice and Collusion, in the Con-
cern of their own Souls: It will be so far
from any good Purpose, that it will lull
them asleep in Security, harden their Con-
sciences, and make them neither sen-
sible of their Sin, nor apprehensive of
their Danger. For indeed the Leaven of
the *Hypocritical Pharisee* seems so far to
have infected the whole Mass of humane
Nature; that we are all too apt to insist
upon our own Justification, and to trust in
our own Righteousness, at least not to dis-
trust it. And 'tis this Self-Flattery, that
furnishes Men, with all that Store of nice
Evasions and Distinctions, those false Co-
lours and Disguises, wherewith they la-
bour

SERM. bour to confound the Nature of Good and

XV.

Evil. Hence is it, that many will freely
 ~~~~~  
 censure that in *Thesi*, which in *Hypothesi*  
 they partially allow, and concur with the  
 Preacher in condemning the Sin, but never  
 own themselves to be Sinners. They con-  
 fess that simple Murder is a horrid Crime,  
 but sanctified Murder for the Sake of God's  
 holy Church, or the good old Cause is so  
 far from sinful, that 'tis meritorious; they'll  
 grant you, that Rebellion is a Sin of a deep  
 Die; but Liberty, and Property are as sa-  
 cred and inviolable, as Majesty itself: And  
 if they be illegally invaded, they may justly  
 make Reprisals. They'll own that Intem-  
 perance is an unthankful Abuse of the  
 good Creatures of God: But then they  
 are like the old Man in \* *Terence*, who  
 thought himself (*pulchrè sobrius*) very com-  
 mendably sober, 'till he found that he had  
 lost the Use both of his Legs and Senses.  
 They'll allow that the Sin of Uncleanness  
 is a prophane Pollution of the *Temple of*  
*the Holy Ghost*; (for so is our Body call'd,  
 1 Cor. vi. 19.) But Marriage will they say

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\* *Eunuch. Act. iv. Sc. 4.*

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is a Remedy against Fornication, and therefore there can be no Snare, no Excess in the conjugal Bed. They'll yield you, that causeless, and unnecessary Separation were a very ill Thing; were the Obligation to Union, and Communion necessary and immutable; but Liberty of Conscience it seems is the *Christian's* Birth-right, and a legal Toleration takes away the very Name, and Nature of *Schism*. They'll conclude, that *Covetousness* is justly branded with the Name of *Idolatry*, as implying a *Trust in uncertain Riches*, and a *Distrust in the living God*: But I should be worse than an *Infidel* (cries the false-hearted *Mammonist*) if I provide not for my own, and therefore in so doing, I can be no *Idolater*.

AND at this Rate, with a little Dexterity, a Man might expound away the whole Law of God, and evade his whole *Christian* Duty; nor could the most convincing, clear, and patheticall Discourses fix any Thing upon such a distorted Mind, that would still be shifting the Case, and either by a Misapplication, or a partial Application of the soundest Doctrine, suck Poyson out

S E R M.  
XV.  
~



SERM. out of the very Antidote. Nor indeed is  
 XV. it possible to convince such a Man as this,  
 who has always an Answer ready coyn'd  
 for his present Purpose; unless perchance  
 by being too frank in his general Conces-  
 sion, he should unawares be ensnar'd in  
 his own Words, and so stand self-con-  
 demn'd.

AND thus was *David* his own just, tho'  
 inconsiderate Judge, in the *Parable* of the  
*Ew-lamb*; for he was so highly incens'd a-  
 gainst the Injustice, and Cruelty of the A-  
 ction therein represented; that he said to  
 2 Sam. xii. *Nathan, As the Lord liveth, the Man that*  
 5. *hath done this, shall surely die, and he shall*  
*restore the Lamb fourfold, because he did*  
*this Thing, and because he had no Pity.*  
 And having thus with all the Zeal and In-  
 dignation, given Judgment against the  
 Person; no doubt but he was strangely  
 surpriz'd and confounded, at the plain, and  
 sudden Answer, *thou art the Man.* Which  
 Freedom of the *Prophet*, as I make no  
 Question, but it is within the Verge of  
 our *Evangelical* Commission, and may in  
 due Place be properly us'd: So I think 'tis  
 most proper in private Reprehensions, (for  
 such

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such was this of *Nathan's*) and withal, I S E R M.  
much fear whether the Iniquity of these XV.  
Times would bear it in Public. For we  
find the Minister that is too *casuistical*, is  
not over-well brook'd by the People: For  
Plainness, and Honesty are not extremely  
acceptable, when Men are to hear of their  
Faults; especially, if (through the secret  
Direction of God's Spirit) he should be so  
pertinent, and happy in his Applications,  
as frequently to touch upon the tender  
Part of guilty Consciences. For then 'tis  
odds, but he is accounted an Enemy, a  
Railer, bold, busy, pragmatistical, and what  
not? only *for telling them the Truth*. But  
know, false *Hypocrite*, whosoever thou art,  
that 'tis not the Preacher that rails, but  
thy Conscience that reproaches thee: And  
that which is now thy Accuser, will one  
Day (without Repentance) prove thy Tor-  
mentor too: Howsoever thou may'st en-  
deavour to stifle the present, but unwel-  
come Motions, which are awaken'd in  
thee by the Sermon, which indeed are no  
other than the Means of restoring Grace,  
and ought to be thankfully comply'd with.  
Know also that it belongs to the Mi-  
nister

S E R M. nister of God, to *exhort*, and to *rebuke with*  
 XV. *all Authority*; and wer't thou as faith-

ful to thyself as he is to his Care, thou  
 wouldst not desire him to *speake only smooth*  
*Things*, and *prophesey Deceits*; but thou  
 wouldst look upon his Rebukes as the di-

Pf, cxli. 5. vinest Part of Charity, and *as an excellent*  
*Oyl that will not break thy Head*. Know

further, that to skin over a rankling  
 Wound, that requires *Caustics* and *Corro-*  
*sives*, can be no right Method of Cure:

And to hear Sermons, and apply them par-  
 tially and hypocritically, as if we had a  
 Tenderness for our Sins, can never heal a  
 wounded Conscience, nor produce any spi-  
 ritual Improvement, or Edification. So ne-  
 cessary is it, that every Man should make  
 a particular Application of what he hears,  
 and compare it with his own Case, and  
 that he should do it impartially, not con-  
 sulting any corrupt Prejudices, Passions, or  
 Interests, but the Word of God only, which

Heb. iv.  
 12.

*is powerful, and sharper than any two edged*  
*Sword*; *piercing even to the dividing asun-*  
*der of Soul and Spirit, and of the Joints*  
*and Marrow, and is a Discerner of the*  
*Thoughts, and Intentions of the Heart*: The

Since-

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Sincerity of which, will be best judg'd of, S E R M. XV.  
by the good Resolutions that follow there-  
upon. For

A *Second* Thing requir'd in the heedful *Hearer*, in order to his spiritual Advantage and Edification, is a present, speedy, and stedfast Resolution of practising what he hears.

AND *First*, the Necessity of such a Resolution, in general, is manifest; because indeed Hearing is suppos'd to be subordinate to Practice, as the Means to the End: For the Design of Preaching is not to gratify *itching Ears*, nor entertain squeamish Fancies; not to fill Mens Heads with airy Notions and Speculations, *which minister* 1 Tim. i. *Questions, rather than Edifying*: But 'tis to<sup>4</sup> establish Men in the true Faith, and to raise the goodly Superstructure of a holy Life, upon that Basis and Foundation: 'Tis to instruct those that are ignorant, and refresh the Memories of those that are forgetful; 'tis to urge them to their Duty, and dissuade them from their Sins, by all those powerful Motives of Encouragement on the one Hand, and Terror  
on



SERM. on the other, which are peculiar to the  
 XV. Gospel. And therefore I can't see, what  
 possible Advantage can arise from hearing  
 of Sermons, unless Men resolve to practise what they hear. For *Edification*, that  
*popular Word*, with which so many please,  
 and deceive themselves, is but as *sounding*  
*Brass*, and a *tinkling Cymbal*; unless it  
 brings forth the Fruits of Righteousness  
 in their Lives and Conversations: And  
 whatever they may mean by *Edification*,  
 who most talk on't (which I believe would  
 puzzle them to answer on the sudden) yet  
 certain enough it is, that it can never consist  
 barely in *hearing the Word*, and a mere  
 unactive Knowledge: And let them heap  
 to themselves Teachers, and Lecturers every  
 Day in the Week, they'll reap but little  
 Benefit by it, if they aim no further; because  
 they want that, which is absolutely  
 necessary to perfect the Saint, compleat his  
 Knowledge, and make him happy, which  
 is a suitable Practice. For 'tis this, and  
 nothing less than this, that can entitle  
 them to that Blessing of our Saviour's,  
*If ye know these Things, happy are ye if ye*  
*do*

*do them.* But if Men enjoy the Opportunity of knowing their Duty, and do actually know it, and yet after all leave it undone; then are they doubly unhappy; because they are accountable, not only for the bare Omission, but for the Misimprovement, and Abuse of that Talent of Knowledge, which was given them to profit withal: And profit 'tis impossible they should, unless they conform their Practice to the *Knowledge*, which they receive from *the Lips of him who keeps it.* But

SERM.  
XV.

*Secondly*, THAT this Resolution may have its due Effect, it is also necessary, that it be speedily put in Execution, without any Demur or Delay whatsoever. For when a Man is once convinc'd by the Word of God, of the Necessity of any Duty, or the Heinousness of any Sin: He has nothing left to do, but to act according to his present Conviction. And of this he ought to be immediately determin'd in his own Mind, before any Thing else intervenes, that may divert, or alter his good Intentions; and that for these Reasons:

*First*, BECAUSE 'tis dangerous even to capitulate with a treacherous Enemy, and

SERM. so long as we continue unresolv'd, or  
 XV. but imperfectly resolv'd; so long are we  
 upon Capitulation, as it were, with *Satan*, and do expose ourselves to his secret Wiles and Stratagems, and *we are not ignorant of his Devices*, although we can't always avoid them: We are not ignorant, how ready, and industrious he is, to come, *and take away the Seed, that is sown by the Way-side*: To deface the Memory of that, which is coldly, and carelessly entertain'd; to stifle the inward Motions, and Misgivings of our Souls, by false Insinuations, and wicked Suggestions; to assault us with fresh Temptations, and discourage us with imaginary Difficulties; that so by any Means he may get *an Advantage over us*; as most certainly he will, unless we prevent his malicious Industry, by speedy, vigorous, and effectual Resolutions of *doing, as well as bearing the Word*.

*Secondly*, WE ought not to make any Delays in the Case, because as the *Devil* is envious and subtle, so is the Heart of Man frail, fickle, and deceitful; so deceitful, that we cannot safely rely upon our best, and most solemn Purposes, unless they

they be immediately put in Execution, and S E R M.  
confirm'd by Practice. Hence is it, that XV.  
so many good Resolutions prove abortive,  
and dwindle at last into some faint Wishes,  
and feeble Endeavours; too feeble alas,  
to struggle with an inveterate Custom of  
Sinning, or to resist the vehement Sollici-  
tations of Riches, Honour and Pleasure;  
those bewitching Baits, with which Man-  
kind is so often caught.

AND therefore, when our Conscience is  
once awaken'd by the Sound of the *Gospel*,  
and the Impression is warm, and lively  
upon our Spirits, and our Affections are  
just kindling into Repentance; then ought  
we immediately to second the kindly Mo-  
tions, by piously resolving to practice what  
we hear, and by an actual, and speedy Per-  
formance of what we so resolve: That so  
we may gather spiritual Strength, and im-  
prove the imperfect Disposition into a Ha-  
bit of doing well, before any Change hap-  
pens, either in our Minds or Circumstan-  
ces.

*Thirdly*, ALL this ought to be done  
without any the least Procrastination, *even*  
*to Day whilst it is call'd to Day, lest any*  
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S E R M. *of us be hardened through the Deceitfulness*  
 XV. *of Sin, and so receive the Grace of God in*  
*vain.* For whensoever the Minister of  
 God, does so faithfully, and plainly re-  
 present any Man's particular Case, as that  
 he cannot but perceive himself to be really  
 affected, and nearly concern'd; behold,  
*then is the accepted Time, behold then is the*  
*Day of Salvation,* which nevertheless, ex-  
 cept it be the better improv'd, may after  
 all, be turn'd into a Day of Provocation:  
 For certainly there can be nothing more  
 provoking to the God of Love and Pity,  
 than the retchless Neglect, or prophane  
 Abuse of his Grace, and the precious  
 Means of it under the *Economy of the Go-*  
*spel.* So provoking indeed it is, that  
 it even extorts that Sort of Punishment  
 from God, which he does not willingly  
 inflict, *viz.* spiritual Reprobation and De-  
 reliction, which is the most deplorable E-  
 state of the Soul, of all others, on this  
 Side Hell and Damnation. And there-  
 fore we ought thankfully, and readily to  
 embrace the blessed Opportunity, as soon  
 as ever it is offer'd; and (with holy *Da-*  
*vid*) *make haste, and delay not to keep the*  
*Commandments*

*Commandments of the Lord*; lest Satan<sup>SERM.</sup> should ensnare us, our own Hearts deceive<sup>XV.</sup> us, or which is worse than all, the Grace of God desert us. But

*Thirdly*, THAT our good Resolutions may not after all miscarry, it is requisite that they be firm and stedfast; for the Work of Repentance consists not in a single Act; nor is one serious Mood, one *Paroxysm* of Devotion (and that but short) sufficient to denominate a Man religious. No; true Repentance is a thorough Change of the Soul, a total Conversion from Sin, and renders the Creature subject to God the Creator. And to be truly religious, implies a steddy, regular, and uniform Course of holy Living; which though it may meet with some Rubs and Letts, by Reason of our natural Infirmities; yet it is never wholly interrupted, or broken off; and therefore these pious Resolutions which are excited in us by the quickening Power of God's Word and Spirit, ought to be prosecuted, not only with Vigour, but with Constancy too, *maugrè* all those Difficulties which we must of Necessity encounter in the Practice of our

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~ Duty, and those Temptations that will endeavour to seduce us from it. For 'tis Perseverance only, that can entitle us to the Reward: And unless we *remain faithful unto Death*, we cannot hope to receive *the Crown of Life*. And since the Life of Man is but one State of Probation, the Reformation of a Week, a Month, a Year, whilst we are under the strongest, and most immediate Influence of Conviction, is not enough to prove us sincere and constant. So far from that, that it rather upbraids our Hypocrisy, and Inconstancy: If after all we backslide, and baffle our first Resolutions, by repeating some Sins o'er again, or by desisting from a Course of Virtue and Piety, which we were once enter'd into. For this carries a tacit Confession along with it, that in so doing, we act against Knowledge and Conscience; and that it was in our Power to do otherwise: Nay farther, it argues the greatest Weakness, and Depravity of Mind imaginable; 'tis likewise a Relapse into Sickness, after *Nature* and *Art* have both struggled against it, which is a Sign that the Distemper is too hard both for the Constitution, and

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and the Remedy. If therefore we either S E R M.  
expect, or desire to profit by the Word, XV.  
we must take up a holy Resolution to submit ourselves to its Directions in all Things, and regulate our Practice accordingly. And we must execute this Resolution speedily and vigorously: And not only so, but we must pursue it stedfastly unto the End; lest after all, we fall short of the Hope of our Salvation. And thus I have made an Enquiry, I hope, not altogether unsatisfactory, into the principal Dispositions, and Preparations of Soul, which qualify Men to hear the Word, as they ought to do; and they are found to be chiefly these that follow. In Respect of God; *First*, Reverence, as we are in his more immediate Presence: And *Secondly*, Faith, as 'tis his Word, upon which we attend. In Respect of the Preacher, *First* Humility, as he is the Minister of God, and vested with his Authority. And *Secondly* Discretion, as he is but a Man, and so subject to humane Frailty. In Respect to ourselves, *First* a particular Application of what is said, every Man to his own private Conscience; that so no Man may be wholly unaffected,

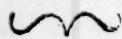


SERM. and unconcern'd. *Secondly*, a speedy, and  
 XV. stedfast Resolution of practising what we  
 hear, that so we may attain that true, and  
 profitable Application, which consists in the  
 Reformation of our Lives.

AND now there is but one thing more  
 necessary by way of Preparation, which I  
 designedly reserv'd for the last Place, be-  
 cause 'tis that indeed, upon which all the  
 rest depend; and without which they can-  
 not be acquir'd: And that is humble, and  
 earnest Prayer to Almighty God, for the  
 Assistance, and Co-operation of his Holy  
 Spirit: For God is the sole Author, and  
 Donor of every good Gift, and Grace.  
 'Tis he that must reveal himself to us,  
 and at the same Time prepare our Facul-  
 ties to discern so bright, and glorious an  
 Object; 'tis he that must enlighten our  
 Understandings, and yet captivate them all  
 the while to the Obedience of Faith; 'tis  
 he that must subdue our stubborn Wills,  
 and regulate our disorderly Affections; 'tis  
 he that must awaken our drowzy Con-  
 sciences, and touch them with a Sense of  
 Sin; 'tis he that must inspire them with  
 pious Thoughts, and holy Purposes; 'tis  
 he

he that must support and strengthen, di-<sup>SERMON</sup>  
rect and govern us in all our Ways, <sup>XV.</sup>  
and *stablish us in every good Word and*  
*Work.* Without this internal Operation of  
his *blessed Spirit*, thus softening and culti-  
vating, framing and fixing our fleshly  
Hearts; the most laborious, and powerful  
*Ministers*, the most sedulous, and constant  
Attendance upon the Word, and all other  
possible outward Means would avail nothing  
towards our Edification. *For Paul may plant,*  
*and Apollos may water, but 'tis God* (and  
he only) *that giveth the Increase.* And  
were the *Ministers* of the Gospel, at pre-  
sent as miraculously endow'd, as the *Apo-*  
*stles* themselves; *could they speak with the*  
*Tongues of Men and Angels*; yet there  
would be no Eloquence, no Persuasion,  
no Force, nor Conviction in their Words;  
unless the Ears, and Hearts of the *Hear-*  
*ers* were open'd, and prepar'd by the quick-  
ening, and converting Grace of God;  
which pretious, and inestimable Gift, is to  
be obtain'd only by diligent Prayer. Dan-  
gerous therefore, and presumptuous is the  
Mistake of those, who whilst they love to  
compare, or rather set at Variance the Or-  
dinances

S E R M. dinances of God; still give the Preference

XV.  to Preaching above Prayer. Whereas in Truth, Preaching and Hearing, and all other subordinate Means, must needs be fruitless and ineffectual, and indeed unacceptable to God, unless they be sanctified, and consecrated by Prayer.

FOR Prayer being the best Acknowledgment which we can make, of the Power and Goodness of God, and our Dependence on him; the Use of other Means, and the Neglect of this can argue nothing else but vain Confidence in our own Strength and Abilities; without any Reliance upon him, in whom alone is our Sufficiency. And this without Question, is a just Forfeiture of that Grace, and those Blessings, which we might otherwise expect. If therefore we be truly zealous to discharge our Duty towards God, the Minister, and ourselves, *in hearing the Word*: And if we be really desirous of the *sincere Milk of the Word*, that we may grow thereby, in all *Christian* Graces and Virtues; then ought we to prepare ourselves by private Prayer before we presume to approach the House of God, beseeching him

*Of hearing the Word profitably.* 441

him that he would give us enlighten'd SERM.  
Minds, and honest Hearts, faithful Me- XV.  
mories, pure Affections, and stedfast Re-  
solutions. We ought also to join in the  
publick Prayers of the Congregation, with  
all the Ardency of Affection, and Intense-  
ness of Devotion that is possible; that so  
our Hearts being gradually rais'd above the  
World, and worldly Things, may be the  
better dispos'd for the Reception of those  
heavenly Truths we are afterwards to hear.  
In Sermon Time, we ought to accompany  
the *Preacher* all along, with short Ejacu-  
lations: Such as may *sublime* our Thoughts,  
and yet *fix* them too, and not in the least  
interrupt our Attention. When it is end-  
ed, we are to join with him again, in  
praying for the Fructification of the  
Word, and the Edification of all that are  
present; and then we are to receive the  
Blessing pronounc'd by the Lips of the  
Priest, with all Humility, and Gladness of  
Heart: And apply it comfortably to our  
selves, by a private Petition of our own.  
After our Return Home, we ought to re-  
tire into our Closets, or rather into our own  
Hearts; and by private Meditation devote  
ourselves



S E R M. ourselves to God, begging his Assistance  
XV. in the Performance, and daily renewing  
our Suit, that we may be able to persevere  
in it. And that those who thus hear, and  
thus pray, may themselves also be heard,  
and answer'd; God of his infinite Mercy  
grant, for the Sake of his Son *Jesus Christ*  
our Lord: To whom with the Father,  
and the Holy Spirit, be ascrib'd as is due  
all Praise, Glory, Might, Majesty, and Do-  
minion, now, henceforth, and for ever-  
more.





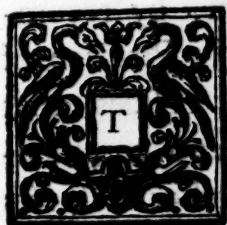
## S E R M O N   X V I .

The Duties of Sobriety, Watchfulness, and Assiduity in Prayer recommended.

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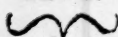
I Ep. PET. iv. § 7. latter Part.

*Be ye therefore sober, and watch  
unto Prayer.*



THE Life of a *Christian* is in S E R M. XVI.  
Scripture not unfitly compar'd to a State of Warfare,  
in which the Soul of Man is perpetually beleaguer'd  
with numberless Troops of Temptations,  
that are still furnish'd out of a wicked  
World,

SERM. World, that is never to be drain'd of its Vanities, and invited in by the treacherous Correspondence of our sinful Flesh, and led on with great Fury, and *marshalled*, and conducted with great Art and Stratagem, by our potent, and subtle Enemy the Devil.

XVI.  


WE had need therefore (as we value our own Safety) to fortify frail Nature all we can, and to look well about us, and keep constantly upon our Guard, and in a Posture of Defence, and sue to Heaven for the Succours of divine Grace, lest by any secret Ambush we should unawares be ensnared, or any sudden, and violent Onset overpower'd, and made miserable Captives to Sin, Death, and Hell.

AND it is the Design of St. *Peter* in the Words of the Text, to make us sensible of the imminent Danger we are in, and to prepare us for the Combate, by recommending to us the habitual Practice of three special Duties, which, besides, that they are highly reasonable, and commendable in themselves, are in other Respects most excellent Preservatives to our Virtue and Innocence. The Duties, namely of Sobriety,

*Affiduity in Prayer recommended.* 445

briety, Watchfulness, and Affiduity in SERM.  
Prayer: Which three in Conjunction will XVI.  
enable us to stand against the Wiles of the  
Devil, and to quench all the fiery Darts  
of the Wicked. My present Business there-  
fore shall be

I. *First*, To shew how useful, and need-  
ful they are to this Purpose: And

II. *Secondly*, To press the Practice upon  
you by proper Motives.

I. *First*, I SHALL shew how needful, and  
useful the Duties of Sobriety, Watchful-  
ness and Prayer are to enable us to repel  
Temptation, and avoid Sin.

To begin with the *First*, that of Sobriety,  
which I understand here, not strictly,  
for a due Moderation in Eating or Drink-  
ing, but in a laxer Sense, for a reasonable  
Restraint of our Appetites and Passions, in  
the Use of all the Pleasures of Sense, and  
all worldly Enjoyments whatsoever.

AND the Necessity, and Usefulness of  
Sobriety, taken in this Sense, in order to  
maintain our Station, and resist the Solici-  
tations of Satan, is sufficiently apparent,  
and



SERM. and that from these two Reasons: *First*,  
 XVI. because an Indulgence to our sensual Ap-  
 petites, at once renders us listless, and unfit  
 for the Performance of our Christian Duty,  
 and ready to close with, nay greedy to hunt  
 after any Temptation that hangs out the  
 inviting Bait of Pleasure. And

*Secondly*, BECAUSE the Restraint of these  
 our Appetites within the Bounds of Rea-  
 son and Religion, both enures us to the  
 Practice of what is good and virtuous, and  
 fortifies the Soul in that Part where its  
 greatest Weakness lies, and where Temp-  
 tation would otherwise find the easiest Ad-  
 mittance.

*First*, I say, because an Indulgence to  
 our sensual Appetites at once renders us  
 listless, and unfit for the Performance of  
 our Christian Duty, and ready to close  
 with any Temptation that hangs out the  
 inviting Bait of Pleasure. And this Ex-  
 perience is a constant Witness to, take the  
 Instance where you please. For Example,  
 luxurious Feeding pampers the Body, and  
 makes it rampant and unmanageable; but  
 at the same Time, it clouds the Brain, and  
 clogs it in its proper Operations; it stupi-  
 fies

fies the Reason, and makes it incapable of governing the brutal Part, or of raising itself up to the Contemplation of Things that are spiritual and divine. And so, excessive Drinking heats the Blood, and exalts the Spirits for a Time; but then when it is carried to a Pitch, it ends in Stupefaction; at best it dissipates the Thoughts, and indisposes Men for any Thing that is serious, and leads them into a thousand, unthought of Follies and Extravagancies. Thus an ambitious Pursuit of Honour is apt to make Men as giddy as they are vain, and often pushes them upon dangerous Precipices, when they are got to the Height that they aspir'd to; but to be sure, it takes off their Minds from better Things, and quenches that which should be the *Christian's* only Ambition, i. e. *to press toward the Mark for the Prize of the high Calling of God in Christ Jesus*. And so again, the immoderate Love of Wealth at once engrosses, and depresses all their Thoughts, and buries their groveling Souls deep in this Earth, without any Hope of Heaven, or the least Tendency of a Desire towards it.

AND

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SERM. AND thus it always is with those that  
 XVI. indulge any kind of unreasonable Appetites; they are entirely devoted to the Service of their darling Lusts, but utterly indispos'd to the Service of God, and unapt for the Duties of Religion. You may as well read a Lecture of Decency, and Cleanliness to a Swine, as go about to recommend Christian Humility and Condescension to the Ambitious, or Heavenly-mindedness to the Covetous, or Abstinence and Continence to the intemperate, or lascivious Person. No! these are Things that they have no Manner of Relish for; nay, that they have the utmost Aversion to.

BUT yet, (which is the Unhappiness of their Case) they are not, they cannot be more averse to that which is good, than they are prone to that which is evil, provided the Sin be but baited with any Thing that's agreeable to their Inclinations.

'TIS possible indeed the Ambitious may not be covetous, nor the Covetous intemperate or unchaste. Complexion or Use, (or what is most likely) the Interest of the Predominant Vice may incline them otherwise. But present any of them all with  
 the

the agreeable Temptation, and they give <sup>SERM.</sup>  
in to it immediately. Like People that <sup>XVI.</sup>  
are distemper'd in Brain, who, in their In-  
tervals, and upon indifferent Things, will  
seem to talk pertinently enough, but touch  
once upon the unfortunate Cause of their  
Madness, and they presently begin to rave,  
and betray all the Disorder imaginable.

THUS, give the ambitious but any  
Hopes of supplanting the Man he envies,  
and rising higher upon his Ruine, and you  
need not egg him forward, for he is ready  
to leap over Justice, Friendship, Honour,  
and all such little Obstacles, if he may but  
attain his End. Let but the covetous spy  
the happy Opportunity of over-reaching  
his Neighbour in some gainful Bargain,  
and he need be no farther instructed, for  
he will fawn, flatter, lye, swear, drink, or  
any thing rather than part with his Ad-  
vantage. Let the riotous Liver hear but  
of an Entertainment, and Company, that  
is suitable to his Palate, and he need not  
be press'd to take his Part in Voluptuous-  
ness; for this, he thinks is his Portion,  
and his Lot this. This he takes to be the



SERMON. very End of Living. In brief, let the Adulterer know but when, and where he may accomplish his unlawful Desires, without the Danger of immediate Discovery, and he runs with eager Haste, impatient 'till he sacrifice his Money, Reputation, Health, Body and Soul together in the smoaky Flames of his impure Lust.

So that when Men live in the habitual Indulgence of any inordinate Appetite, or irregular Passion, the Temptation, that is properly address'd to their particular Foible, is pretty sure to meet with a welcome Reception; nay, if it does not offer itself, it shall be industriously sought for, and kindly invited in.

WHICH shews that 'tis hardly possible to keep ourselves innocent, unless we confine ourselves to the Rules of Sobriety, and subject our Appetites, and Passions to the Government of Reason and Religion. Which, if we chuse to do, we shall find it excellent Service to us, when we are at any Time attack'd by the evil one.

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Secondly, BECAUSE such a reasonable SERM. XVI.  
Restraint as this, would both enure us to  
the Practice of what is good and virtuous,  
and fortify the Soul in that Part where its  
greatest Weakness lies, and where Tem-  
ptation would otherwise gain the easiest  
Admittance. For the same Aptness that  
the Inordinateness of our Affections, and  
the immoderate Prosecution of any earthly,  
or sensual Good have to distract our Minds,  
and alienate them from God, and unqua-  
lify them altogether for serious Considera-  
tion, or the spiritual Exercise of Prayer,  
and other the Acts of religious Worship.  
The same have Sobriety, and Regularity  
to compose us, and make us thoughtful  
and considerate, devout and observant of  
God's holy Laws.

FOR the Man that maintains a good  
Command over his Passions, and does not  
suffer himself to be carried away by irre-  
gular Desires, has the free Exercise of his  
Reason; and unbyass'd Reason is always  
on the Side of Virtue and Religion.

AND the habitual Use of moderating our  
Appetites and Passions, and keeping them

G g 2                      within

SERM.

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within Rule, helps to make the Practice of Virtue both easy and delightful. Thus for instance, he that observes a strict Temperance in Eating and Drinking enjoys a purer, and more relishing Pleasure than the most refined *Epicure* of them all: And he is so accusom'd to this sober kind of Pleasure, that any Excess is an Uneasiness to him. Thus he that knows how to put a true Value upon all temporal Enjoyments, and to set Bounds to his own Desires, rich only in the Treasure of a contented Mind, that Man truly enjoys himself, and lives in Quiet, and at Freedom, and wonders what it is that the busy part of the World are bustling for, what makes the Ambitious climb so dangerously high, and the Covetous condemn themselves to such perpetual Drudgery. He thinks he finds himself happy in being free from all that anxious Care and Pains, which no earthly Good can e're compensate for. Such is the Satisfaction that naturally attends a virtuous Course of Living, when the Foundation of it is well laid, in the due Regulation of the Passions and Inclinations according to Sobriety.

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IN which also there is this farther Advantage, that it gives Strength, and Firmness to the Soul, and fortifies it in that Part where 'tis most liable to Impression. For 'tis through the Frailty, and Fondness of our Appetites and Passions, that Temptation chiefly prevails over us, and that we are so easily betray'd into Sin. But when these are well commanded, and brought under sober Discipline, the whole Force of the Mind is better united, and able to make a more resolute Resistance; and wherever the Attack is made, the Pass will not be found altogether unguarded.

SENSUAL Pleasure will employ its Charms in vain upon the Man that is thus prepar'd; for he will soon recollect, and resolve with himself, that the unfading Joys of Heaven are infinitely to be preferr'd before the *Pleasures of Sin*, that are but for a Season.

HONOUR, the Idol that is so much ador'd, will not readily seduce *him* from his Duty, who is at leisure soberly to reflect, that the Applause of a good Conscience,



and the Approbation of his God is much more valuable to him, than the unstable Opinion, and false Praises of Men.

THE Love of Money will not easily bewitch him, who reckons with himself, that *Godliness with Contentment is great Gain*, and *whose Heart is chiefly where his Treasure is*, that is, in Heaven, where neither Moth nor Rust doth corrupt, and where Thieves do not break through, nor steal.

IN short, whatever the Temptation be, it will not tamely be yielded to, it will go near to meet with a stout Repulse, if the Man be but endu'd with Soberness of Mind, and has been us'd to govern himself reasonably and regularly. So useful, so excellent a Guardian is Sobriety to Virtue and Innocence, especially when seconded by that which our Apostle recommends in the second Place, viz.

*Secondly, WATCHFULNESS.* And indeed as Intemperance and Drowziness, or Stupidity commonly go together, so 'tis but necessary, if we would consult our own Safety, to be vigilant, as well as sober, lest, like the unfortunate Trojans, *vino somno-*

*que*

*que sepulti*, we should be set upon at unawares, and become an easy Prey to the Enemy.

SERM.  
XVI.  
~~~~~

By Watchfulness, I mean, a strict Care, and Circumspection in Behaviour, in order to avoid as much as may be, or to provide against the Danger of Temptation, which is to the virtuous Soul, as the Centinel to the Garrison, whose Business is heedfully to observe every Motion or Approach of the Enemy, and to give the Alarm to those within, that they may be in a Readiness to defend themselves.

AND there is the greater Need of all this watchful Care in our Christian Warfare, because our Adversary the Devil, besides his mighty Power, and artful Cunning, is implacably malicious, and indefatigably industrious to work our Ruine: His Forces are formidably great, his Instruments very numerous, the Methods, and Opportunities of assaulting, or undermining us are various, and almost infinite; and besides all this, there is a treacherous Party within us, even our own fleshly Lusts, that are but too apt, upon Invitation,

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tion, to open the Gates wide, and let them into the midst of our Hearts; which therefore, unless we keep with the utmost Diligence and Vigilance, we shall run a perpetual Hazard of coming into the Enemy's Possession, and being led away into a miserable Captivity.

It will behove us therefore, as we love our own Souls, to take good Heed to our selves, and have our Eyes well about us; and that Satan may not gain an Advantage of us, nor delude, and ensnare us by any of his Devices, it will be absolutely needful among other Precautions, to observe these short, and easy Rules.

THE *First* is, to be distrustful of our selves, and in particular, not to indulge ourselves too freely in the Use, and Enjoyment of any Thing, that we have a strong Inclination to, or take a peculiar Pleasure in. For where the Inclination is violently strong, 'tis a suspicious Sign that 'tis likewise corrupt; though perhaps the Satisfaction that we take in the Thing we like, may fully possess us with an Opinion of its Lawfulness. But then this Opinion

is not the Result of any sober Reason, but a favourable Prepossession that prevents at least, if it does not pervert the Judgment. S E R M.
XVI.

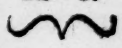
And even admitting the Object of our Desire to be lawful, yet the Degree of Affection with which we prosecute it may be, or, by Indulgence, may grow immoderate; and when it is so, it interferes with the entire Love of God, and robs him of the Honour due to his sovereign Perfections and Goodness. However it be, there cannot be too much Caution us'd of this Sort, because many Men have miscarried fatally, by allowing themselves a Liberty, in what they took to be innocent, but no possible Harm can come of refraining even from what a Man knows to be so.

Secondly, ANOTHER Rule is to avoid, as much as may be, all the Approaches, and Tendencies to Sin. For in a Siege, not only the main Citadel, but all the Avenues, and Out-works too, ought to be defended, because the more the Enemy advances upon you, the more will he annoy you, and the more imminent is your Danger. It is best therefore, always to keep them

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XVI.

at a safe Distance, and never by an indiscreet Use of Liberty to betray our own Security. For instance, if the Pleasantry of Wit, and innocent Mirth, as 'tis commonly call'd, be too apt to draw you to Intemperance in your Cups, you must not allow yourself the Freedom of such dangerous good Company. If the Entertainments of the Stage be apt to fill your Minds with Levity and Vanity, if not with impure Ideas, and unlawful Desires, I say, upon this Experience, and to such Persons, Plays, whatsoever they are in themselves, are certainly sinful in their Consequence, and therefore ought to be avoided. If the Use of any lawful Game be apt to transport you into an Excess of Anger, and make waste of your precious Time, the Diversion is no longer innocent to you, but ought to be laid aside. And so in all other Cases where the Transition is too easy, and open from that which is accounted innocent, to that which is certainly sinful.

Thirdly, It is also a very useful Rule, and a needful Caution to guard most strictly,

ly, and industriously against those Sins, SERM. XVI.
to which we find ourselves most addicted; 
and to shun the Occasions that would be
most likely to lead us into the *Temptation*
that so easily besets us. And to this End e-
very one ought very carefully to consult
his own Complexion and Temper, his Ha-
bits, Customs, &c. and to plant his Guard
accordingly. If any Man suspects his own
Chastity, he of all Things ought not to pam-
per the Flesh by high Feeding, but should
rather endeavour to mortify it, and bring it
under by a constant Regularity, and frequent
Abstinence; he ought not to allow himself
in any over-free, and familiar Conversa-
tion, but should rather *make a Covenant*
with his Eyes, and not suffer them to wan-
der after any deluding Object.

If any Man is prone to immoderate An-
ger, he ought to keep the strictest Rein
that he can upon the unruly Passion, he
ought to take especial Notice of those
Provocations that are wont to enkindle it
most on the Sudden, and to eschew them
all that is possible; he ought to resolve
aforehand, whenever he does meet with
them,

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them, to bear them manfully, and not to be baffled out of his Temper, and his Conduct. And so in all other Cases, where the Experience of one's own Infirmary shews the Necessity of it, there ought to be a double Watch set, or otherwise there's no tolerable Degree of Innocence to be maintain'd, no Temptation to be resisted.

Fourthly, It will be a very good, and a safe Rule frequently to consider, and deliberate with ourselves, what are the Snares, and Rocks of Offence that are most likely to lie in our Way, according to the Course of Life and Business that we are engaged in, and the Interests, Alliances, and Dependances that we have in the World. For Danger foreseen may the better be fenc'd off, but the Suddenness of a Surprise often betrays the Succours of Reason, and leaves a Man helpless, and defenceless in his greatest Exigence.

THIS was the unhappy Occasion of St. *Peter's* great Slip; he was very forward, and zealous in his Professions, and seemingly stout in his Resolutions too, when he said,

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said, *Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee.* But these, it appears, though big Words, were not so well weigh'd, as they should have been. For

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Mat. xxvi.

35.

he had not seriously consider'd the Greatness of the Trial, nor compar'd it with his own Strength, nor begg'd God's Aid to enable him to sustain it; and therefore he sunk under it, and out of Cowardice deny'd his Lord and Master. So much Need was there of that seasonable Warning that our Saviour had given a little before to him, and the rest; *Watch and pray, lest you enter into Temptation; the Spirit indeed is willing, but the Flesh is weak.* And from his Example we may learn, that the weaker the Flesh is, the greater Need there is of Foresight, and Precaution to support it in the Hour of Temptation. We ought therefore to look well about us and before us, and consider how we are prepar'd for the Conflict; how to deny ourselves instead of denying Christ, how to pluck out a right Eye, or cut off a right Hand, how to part with any thing that is nearest, and dearest

Mat. xxvi.

41.

SERM. dearest to us for his Sake; how to stand
 XVI. the Shock of Envy, and Obloquy without
 ~~~~~ flinching from our Duty, and to suffer for  
 our Religion, as well as dispute for it, rather than defend it by any unlawful Means. These, and such as these are sharp Trials, which if they should fall to our Lot, unless we be well fore arm'd indeed, will prove too hard for our Courage and Patience.

BUT, if we apprize ourselves well of them aforehand, and resolve within our selves that God's Providence may thus put us to the Test whenever he sees good, this will help mightily to alleviate the Burden, when 'tis laid upon us, especially, if according to our Apostle's Exhortation, in the *third* Place, we *watch unto Prayer*, and look up to Heaven for the Comfort, and Support, which for asking will thence be given us.

*Thirdly*, AND indeed, after all our Care in the good Government of ourselves, and all our Watchfulness against the Attempts of the Enemy, it will be absolutely necessary to have our last Resort to God in frequent,

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frequent, and fervent Prayer, because the S E R M.  
Frailty, and Corruption of our sinful Flesh XVI.  
is extremely over-match'd by that mighty  
Force, and Subtlety that is employ'd a-  
gainst us, and we cannot presume, the  
very best of us all, upon our own natu-  
ral Strength, to be able to withstand our  
spiritual Foes, and when we have done all  
to stand. No! *except the Lord keep the  
City, the Watchman waketh but in vain.*  
And as our own Care without his Provi-  
dence, cannot protect us from bodily Dan-  
ger, so neither can our own Endeavours,  
without the Concurrence of his Grace  
preserve us from Sin.

BUT then, however great our own In-  
sufficiency is, *his Grace is certainly suf-  
ficient for us*; and his Goodness, and Ve-  
racity are both likewise engag'd on our  
Side; *for God is faithful who will not suf-  
fer us to be tempted above that we are able,  
but will with the Temptation also make a  
Way to escape, that we may be able to bear  
it.* And our blessed Saviour (who was  
himself also tempted, and is both able,  
and willing to succour those that are so)  
has

S E R M. has directed, and encourag'd us to pray,  
 XVI. *that we be not led, that we enter not into*  
 ~~~~~ *Temptation, i. e. that we be not brought*  
under the Power of it, nor so entangled
by it, as not to be able to get free again:
And he has given a comfortable Assu-
rance of the Success of such our Prayers,
even because God knows that we have ab-
solute Need of his gracious Assistance, and
 Mat. vii. *therefore, if we being evil, know how to*
 11. *give good Gifts to our Children, how much*
more shall our heavenly Father give the
Holy Spirit to them that ask him? If na-
 tural Affection be powerful enough to pre-
 vail in the one Case, how much more
 shall the Benignity, Goodness, and Mercy
 of God in the other?

THIS therefore is our surest Relief in
 Time of Danger and Distress, and hither
 we ought to have our constant Recourse,
 humbly beseeching God to protect, and
 deliver us from Evil, in such Manner as
 he in his fatherly Wisdom shall see most
 expedient, whether it be by keeping us
 out of the Way of great Temptations; or
 else by proportioning the Temptations he
 thinks

thinks fit to visit us with, to the Measure S E R M.
of our Strength; or *lastly*, by encreasing XVI.
our Strength, and lending us his extraor-
dinary Aids in Proportion to the Strength,
Greatness, and Violence of the Tempta-
tions wherewith we are to contend. This
is the proper Subject Matter of our Prayer
to Almighty God, when we fly to him for
Deliverance from the Evil of Sin.

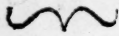
First, I say, that he would be pleas'd
to keep us out of the Way of great Temp-
tations. We must not indeed desire, nor
expect to be totally exempt from Tempta-
tions, (for that would be inconsistent with
a State of Trial, as our present Life is)
but yet from such as are very hazardous,
and likely to prove too hard for us, we
certainly may.

AND though, as being the Soldiers of
Christ, we ought not to decline the Com-
bate when Providence calls us into the
Lists; yet with Submission to the divine
Will, we may endeavour to take Shelter
from a Storm, that would otherwise beat us
down.

AND to this End 'tis lawful, 'tis prudent,
'tis pious to pray, that God would be
VOL. III. H h pleas'd

S E R M.

XVI.


 PROV. XXX.
8.

pleas'd to place us in such Circumstances of Life, as may be least expos'd to the Assaults and Stratagems of *Satan*, such was the Prayer of wise *Agur*, *Give me neither Poverty nor Riches; feed me with Food that is convenient for me; lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? Or lest I be poor and steal, and take the Name of my God in vain.* The Reason of which Request was plainly this, that he thought a middle Estate the safest, as being at a Distance from the Temptation that attends either Extreme, *viz.* Ingratitude and Forgetfulness of God, which is the usual Effect of Plenty and Fulness; and Stealing back'd with Perjury to conceal the Theft, which is sometimes the miserable Refuge of pinching Necessity.

Secondly, WE may, and ought also to pray, that God would please to proportion the Temptations with which he thinks good to exercise us, to the Measure of our Strength, and our particular Frame and Constitution. For all Men are not of the same Make: Some are prepar'd to sustain all the Shocks of Adversity, and remain unmov'd, who in Prosperity soon turn
 7
 giddy,

giddy, and are not able to stand: Others ^{SERM.} again can bear a prosperous Fortune with ^{XVI} Moderation and Evenness enough, who, if the World does but frown, are presently overwhelm'd with Dejection of Spirit and Despondency. Some are able to endure the Severity of Pain with a Resolution, and Constancy becoming a *Christian*, whom the soft Blandishments of Pleasure would soon dissolve into Luxury and Effeminacy. And others again deny themselves in sensual Pleasure, and perhaps despise it too; whom yet the acute Sense of Pain would make impatient and desperate. It is allowable therefore, upon these Considerations, and 'tis indeed the Effect of godly Fear, to beseech God that he would so order Things, and make them work together for our Good, that we may there only be attack'd, where we are best prepar'd, and not where we are incapable of making a resolute Resistance. But

Thirdly, If it shall seem meet to the divine Wisdom to prove us with the ruggedest Sort of Temptations, *with Trials of cruel Mockings and Scourgings, of Bonds and Imprisonments, of Torments and Death;*

it

SERM. it will behove us, as the Exigence requires,
 XVI. to pray for the extraordinary Succours of
 divine Grace, and the whole Armour of
 God, that we may be enabled to *fight the*
good Fight successfully, and finish the toil-
 some Course with Safety and Honour.
 And that we may be refresh'd the mean
 Season with the sweet Consolations of the
 Holy Spirit, that we may be animated, and
 encouraged by that noble Pattern, which
Christ, the Author, and Finisher of our
Faith, and all such his faithful Followers,
 as have been Partakers of his Sufferings,
 have set before us; and that the Spirit of
 Glory may rest upon us also, and transport
 us with the hopeful Prospect of that *far*
more exceeding, and eternal Weight of
Glory, that is to be our Crown hereafter,

AND now may God the righteous Judge
 enable us also so to strive lawfully, for the
 Mastery, by Sobriety, Watchfulness, and
 Affiduity in Prayer, that we may obtain the
 incorruptible Crown of Righteousness,
 which is laid up for all those that love his
 Appearing. *Amen.*

The End of the Third Volume.



